

2017

Homelessness and Housing Strategy Review



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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

- 1.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities (LAs) to conduct a Homelessness Review to inform the development of their Homelessness Strategy. The Review considers key issues of homelessness affecting the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT), what future trends are likely, and what resources are available, both within the Council and via other organisations, to deal with homelessness. This document also analyses housing market pressures in the Borough to complement the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)¹ and provide a further evidence base for the Housing Strategy.
- 1.2 Key achievements since the previous Homelessness and Housing Strategies were implemented include: the completion of 281 affordable homes between 2012/13 and 2016/17; a reduction in homelessness acceptances; continued commissioning of single homeless and rough sleeping services through SPEAR including the accommodation pathway, a female only service, Homeless Health Link and a new service for victims of domestic abuse; early intervention work with households affected by welfare reforms; and joint working between agencies to significantly reduce the number of 16/17 year olds being accepted as homeless, from 39 cases in 2010/11 to 9 in 2016/17.
- 1.3 This document has been developed through analysis of a number of data sources, mapping services in the Borough and consultation with a number of internal and external stakeholders. The Council appreciates the crucial role that partnership working plays in preventing and relieving homelessness and works closely with other statutory agencies and the voluntary sector in the Borough. It is important that existing links are maintained, particularly in light of new duties introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act which require established referral routes between agencies where someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Policy and Legislative Context

- 1.4 The Homelessness Reduction Act is set to be of great significance in terms of how LAs discharge their statutory homelessness duties. By widening the criteria of homelessness and providing more structured support to applicants, in the form of individual plans regardless of their priority need status, the Act is likely to have the effect of an increased demand on housing advice services and the council must consider how best to prepare for this. Although the Government has pledged additional funding to finance this new burden, the Council may have to consider how to divert funding from elsewhere in order to meet these new responsibilities. Established links with local partners will be crucial in discharging some of the new duties brought about by the Act and agencies should ensure that effective collaborative working continues.
- 1.5 The Act presents both opportunities to enhance services and challenges to ensuring adequate resources are available to meet demand from both statutorily homeless households in priority need and applicants not in priority who will nevertheless be owed enhanced assistance. Other future challenges include further welfare reforms, most notably the extension of the under 35 shared accommodation rate to the social sector. The Council must ensure that lessons learned from recent challenges are fed into the Homelessness Strategy and preparations in advance of these changes. Of particular importance is the need to ensure that available prevention tools,

¹ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/housing_market_assessment_draft_report_june_2016.pdf

such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), are utilised effectively and scope to use this budget to support initiatives including the Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS) should be considered.

- 1.6 In relation to housing, the Housing and Planning Act 2016 builds on a number of policies introduced in the Localism Act 2011, including the extension of the Right to Buy to Registered Providers (RPs), measures to tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector and regulations to streamline planning policies to increase the delivery of homes. In addition, the housing white paper released in February 2017 set out the Government's proposals to encourage house building and create 200,000 new home owners by 2020.

Housing Market

- 1.7 The dominant tenure in LBRuT is owner occupation (67%), with the Borough having the fifth highest ownership rates out of the 33 London boroughs and third highest of those who own their home outright, according to Census 2011 data. The proportion of the population in the social rented sector is the fourth lowest in London with just 11% of the population in this sector. 22% of Borough residents live in the PRS, the eighth lowest proportion in London.
- 1.8 High and rising house prices means that maintaining access to the PRS is crucial in providing appropriate housing options for the many residents for whom owner occupation will remain unaffordable for the foreseeable future. It is positive to note that court actions in the PRS, having peaked in 2013/14, have returned to 2010/11 levels. However, accelerated actions including outright claims have increased from 104 in 2010/11 to 180 in 2016/17. As part of preparations for the Homelessness Reduction Act the Council will be considering how best to strengthen prevention services; the PRS will play an important role in this as both a vital resource into which homeless households can be rehoused and in terms of enhanced efforts to prevent homelessness from this sector.
- 1.9 Since the Council transferred its social housing stock to RHP via a large scale voluntary transfer in 2000, social housing in the Borough has been owned by RPs. RHP is the largest with a stock of 6,255 social rented homes, followed by Paragon with 1,703, L&Q with 605 and Thames Valley with 328². These four RPs account for 89% of the 9,947 socially rented homes in the Borough.
- 1.10 The Council and its RP partners continue to maximise lettings to the social sector in the Borough, maintaining numbers of nominations since 2010/11 and turnover of 3.8% (264 lets) and 4.1% (69 lets) for RHP and Paragon stock respectively. Although this represents a strong performance, making best use of social stock should continue to be a priority and ways of enhancing turnover should be explored including encouraging under-occupation moves, thus relieving pressure on the transfer queue from overcrowded families.

Statutory Homelessness

- 1.11 Across London homelessness rose between 2011/12 and 2013/14 before gradually declining year-on-year to 2016/17. Whilst the LBRuT has followed this trend, the decline began sooner and has been far greater than across London. There has been a reduction in the number of decisions and acceptances since 2012/13, from 582 to 319 in 2016/17. In addition, the Borough has the fifth lowest number of homelessness decisions out of all 33 London boroughs and the second lowest rate of acceptances per 1,000 residents in the sub-region. The Council and its partners have been successful in providing effective prevention services and responding to potential challenges, including welfare reforms.

² HCA (2017) *Statistical Data Return 2016 to 2017*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2016-to-2017>

- 1.12 Although LBRuT has relatively low levels of homelessness when compared to London and the sub-region, there remains a continuing demand that the Council must consider and address. As at 1st March 2017 there were 5,678 households on the Borough's housing register and the high cost of market housing in the area means that opportunities for people to find their own housing solutions may be limited. The Council's primary duty in terms of homelessness is to statutorily homeless households although the Homelessness Reduction Act will widen this focus.
- 1.13 It is positive to note that homelessness among 16/17 year olds has significantly reduced since the previous Homelessness Review when it was highlighted as an area of concern. In 2011/12 being 16/17 was the primary reason for priority need for 24% of acceptances, compared to 5% in 2016/17. Strong partnership working between the Council and AfC and the development of a joint working protocol which clearly set out accommodation pathways and referral routes has contributed to this success.
- 1.14 In common with the rest of London, the main reason for homelessness in the Borough is termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs) from the Private Rented Sector (PRS) at 35% of acceptances. This highlights both the increasing difficulties in sustaining PRS accommodation in light of welfare reforms and rising rents, and the need for the Council and its partners in the Borough to consider how best to maintain access to the PRS. Across London demand outstrips supply which serves to drive up rents; continuing to support the development of new rented homes assists with this but will not in itself solve this regional problem. The Homelessness Strategy will set out how the Council might reduce homelessness from the PRS and increase availability of accommodation in this tenure.

Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

- 1.15 SPEAR has operated within LBRuT for the past 30 years, providing extensive accommodation, outreach and other support to people at risk of homelessness and those already sleeping rough. Well-established outreach services mean that there is extensive intelligence about rough sleepers in the Borough, that outreach workers know where to find individuals and have high levels of engagement with them. The number of rough sleepers has increased from 2010/11 to 2016/17 and is higher than the sub-regional average which may be at least partly attributable to this level of intelligence, compared to other boroughs where the scale of rough sleeping is not as well known. Alongside this increase in numbers, analysis of SPEAR's service users has highlighted the significant and complex needs of rough sleepers. There is evidence therefore of the need for continuation of service provision for rough sleepers and to ensure that this service recognises and responds to the varying psychological and physical needs of this group. In 2014/15 one fifth of newly verified rough sleepers were entrenched³. These clients are likely to have more complex needs and are more difficult to successfully resettle and the provision of a targeted outreach team, commissioned via SPEAR, is essential in engaging with this client group.
- 1.16 Increasing numbers of rough sleepers requires a corresponding increase in available accommodation. DCLG funding of £200,000 per annum between 2016/17 and 2018/19 will enable the Council, in partnership with SPEAR, the London Borough of Wandsworth and the Royal Borough of Kingston, to provide an enhanced outreach and resettlement service including HMOs offering a minimum of 12 bed spaces. In addition, in February 2017 the Council's Community Safety Team, working with SPEAR and Refuge and on behalf of both

³ Entrenched rough sleeping is defined by the GLA as: someone who has been seen rough sleeping in the last three months and/or has stayed in a London rough sleeping hostel in the last three months and has been seen rough sleeping at least six times over the last two years

LBRuT and WBC, successfully bid for £244,011 over two years to fund additional services for victims of domestic abuse across the two boroughs. This will see specialist services developed for those high needs victims for whom traditional Refuge accommodation is not appropriate.

- 1.17 The mental health needs of rough sleepers have emerged as a particular concern, with SPEAR reporting that 96% of people living in their accommodation have a mental health issue and that over half these were not receiving support from appropriate services before engaging with SPEAR. There is a need to ensure that adequate mental health provision is in place for rough sleepers and that engagement with such services is central to prevention and relief work with people at risk of rough sleeping, currently or previously sleeping rough.
- 1.18 Relevant agencies, principally the Council and SPEAR, should continue to ensure that effective joint working is in place to share information and collaboratively arrive at solutions for people sleeping rough. There is a strong history of working together to source grant funding which has been maintained since the implementation of the SSA. In order to strengthen information sharing around known rough sleepers, a new cross-agency meeting has recently been set up by the Council. This includes the police, the Council's Housing Information and Advice Service, Community Safety and Parks teams and SPEAR.

Prevention Services

- 1.19 A range of statutory and voluntary agencies provide prevention services across the Borough. These include the Council's Housing Information and Advice Team which aims to prevent homelessness, where possible, from existing accommodation when approached by someone facing homelessness. In instances where this has not been possible, the Resettlement Team provide targeted tenancy sustainment support to vulnerable clients in order to prevent homelessness from their temporary accommodation (TA) or settled accommodation. Since 2012 the team have received 513 referrals and provided advice to a further 691 people at their drop-in sessions. The Council continues to commission Richmond Citizen's Advice Bureau (RCAB) to provide advice on a range of matters including housing; in 2015/16 RCAB provided advice to 4,144 individuals including welfare benefit advice for 2,618 and advice on rent arrears for 158 of these.
- 1.20 The Council provides financial support to residents in the form of the Local Assistance Scheme, RDS and DHP. The Resettlement Team administer the Local Assistance Scheme; in 2015/16 the team received 366 applications for support and awarded £119,557 in grants. RDS peaked at 116 in 2013/14 but have since decreased to 70 in 2015/16 due in part to increasing market rent levels and LHA caps which make renting properties via the Council less financially appealing for private landlords. In 2015/16, £187,000, from a budget of £241,000, was awarded in DHP.
- 1.21 The Council should ensure that it is making full use of available resources in order to provide the most effective prevention service possible. Underspend of DHP should be addressed and measures put in place to ensure that this fund is being utilised as fully as possible by those households for whom it provides a real prevention tool. Similarly, the Local Assistance Scheme budget underspend should also be addressed and consideration given to how best to either maximise spending under this scheme or to use the grant in other related areas to assist with homelessness prevention and relief work, particularly in light of new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act. It is not yet clear how additional grant from the Government will be allocated to fund these new duties and the Council will need to ensure that it makes best use of existing funds to meet current and future demand. As part of this the Council will consider what related schemes and services would benefit from additional funding, should DHP and/or Local Assistance grant be available, for instance to support the RDS.

- 1.22 The Borough has an active voluntary sector and there are strong links established between partners. These need to be maintained, particularly in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the new duties this places on LAs in regards to cooperation with local partners and effective upstream prevention. The Homelessness Forum, a bi-annual meeting of the Council and its partners, is key to sustaining these strong relationships and will provide opportunity to prepare collaboratively for the Act and other arising issues.

Accommodation Services

- 1.23 Relatively low numbers of homeless acceptances means that TA use, and in particular use of B&B, is relatively low and has remained stable over recent years. It is positive to note that there is not an issue with pregnant women or households containing dependant children being in B&B for longer than six weeks which indicates that available TA is being appropriately used and adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that suitable placements are made.
- 1.24 The Council has been successful in maintaining TA provision in Borough and locally in neighbouring boroughs. However, this has involved the Council funding placements in high cost units, due to the nature of the local housing market, and has resulted in a significant overspend in this area. Consideration must be given to what approach the Council favours going forward and how best to balance conflicting priorities of providing local TA whilst ensuring that these are affordable. A more sustainable solution may be to procure TA further afield in which to place those households who do not have a specific need to remain local, while the Council continues to prioritise certain households for in-borough and other local placements, such as those with current child protection proceedings or children at particular educational stages. In January 2016 Universal Credit (UC) was introduced across most of the neighbouring London Borough of Hounslow. Although households placed in TA out of borough claim HB at their original borough, there are implications for LBRuT in terms of the availability of PSL accommodation if landlords withdraw from this market.
- 1.25 Since 2010 LBRuT has provided £11 million in grant funding to RPs from the Housing Capital Programme (HCP) to support the delivery of affordable homes for rent on schemes which would not otherwise have been viable. 118 rented homes were provided through supporting RPs to use their own assets and 42 rented homes were achieved through disposal of Council owned land to RPs some also provided with HCP funding. 227 affordable housing homes were secured through S106 agreements with private developers with HCP providing gap funding for 149 of these to ensure the scheme was financially viable. A further 82 were achieved through the purchase and repair on the open market of homes for affordable rent. Overall, of all the affordable rented homes delivered in this period (469) 55% required funding from the HCP. 48% of these lettings have been to homeless households. The HCP has also been utilised to facilitate RPs extending existing homes; since 2012 RHP and Places for People have delivered 39 extensions which has helped to ease demand from overcrowded families in the Borough.
- 1.26 Whilst development is not in itself the solution to housing need it is part of a multifaceted approach which includes increasing turnover in social stock, improving access to the PRS and where appropriate encouraging access to home ownership. Affordable housing products may not provide accommodation directly for homeless households, who in most cases are likely to be reliant on social rented accommodation, however their development contributes to a longitudinal effect of widening the available housing options in the Borough and, by providing a greater mix of housing which is open to those on low and middle incomes, increasing turnover in social rented stock. The Council should continue therefore to support new development, in particular that which facilitates products which also meet the needs of low/middle income households.

Resources

- 1.27 The Finance Settlement for LBRuT details a homelessness prevention component of how the Revenue Support Grant is calculated in line with the Council's Core Spending Power. The Homelessness Directorate at DCLG identifies this component to assist Councils to resource and address homelessness issues; these are identified in the Borough's Homelessness Strategy. For 2016/17 the Council has allocated £238,800 to Homelessness Prevention Funding to support Rough Sleeping and outreach services. In addition, Commissioning Funding for rough sleepers (formerly Supporting People Funding) will be £246,192.
- 1.28 TA costs are high, relative to the numbers of households using it. In 2015/16, TA costs totalled £1,746,319 of which £1,149,052 was spent on rents which accounted for 65% of the total spend. Although overall spend was £43,481 less than was budgeted for, this is due to savings in other costs, with an overspend relating to rents of £52,353. Given that use of TA has remained fairly static over the period since the previous Homelessness Review, and relatively low levels of homeless acceptances in the Borough, this level of TA spend is indicative of the high costs of maintaining current arrangements whereby homeless households are accommodated in Borough or in neighbouring boroughs. Whether or not it is financially feasible to continue this policy going forward will be an important consideration informing the Homelessness Strategy.
- 1.29 Council-commissioned services include a contract with RCAB to provide generalist community advice (£320,000 per annum), which has been extended until March 2018, and a specialist community advice service from Richmond AID (RAID) (£100,000) which ends in March 2018.
- 1.30 Recent successes in obtaining DCLG grants to enhance provision for rough sleepers and victims of domestic abuse are indicative of the strong partnership working in the Borough and the level of services for people facing a housing problem. New duties brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act necessitate the Council and its partners taking an innovative approach to organising resources and utilising funding streams other than the traditional Government grant and exploiting these opportunities will become increasingly important. Similarly, the Council may need to consider staffing resources to ensure adequate provision to meet additional workload brought about by the Act; this will be clearer once more details are released about additional funding from the Government and once the relatively new SSA structure has had chance to bed-in. Ensuring that all relevant staff receive adequate training in order to comply with the new duties and reduce challenge will be paramount to effective preparation.

Consultation

- 1.31 In preparation for the Homelessness Review a number of key partners including members of the Homelessness Forum were consulted through an email questionnaire. Responses have helped shape priorities for the Review, identifying a number of cross-cutting themes, issues and challenges. The questionnaire addressed the following: preventative services; accommodation pathway and provision; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; partnership working and gaps in provision.
- 1.32 The majority of those consulted feel that there is good partnership work between the Council and its homelessness partners although there are opportunities to improve and develop this further. Many partners are concerned about the rollout of Universal Credit (UC) and the impact this is likely to have on clients' future budget management and ability to meet rental obligations. This is because UC is designed to replicate a monthly salary and is paid to claimants rather than direct to landlords. The onus is on claimants to budget effectively in

order to pass on the housing element of UC as rental payments. The move to online applications is expected to increase demand for digital inclusion work, particularly with vulnerable residents. The small number of TA units and lack of affordable housing within the Borough creates challenges for partners and those in need. There are resource constraints across services which partners feel will be heightened over the coming years given planned changes to the welfare system and anticipated reduction in Council's revenue support grants. Partners are knowledgeable of the services in-borough and, where they are unable to assist directly, will signpost to the relevant service. Earlier prevention is aspired to by local agencies, but currently this is restricted by available resources. The Homelessness Reduction Act will introduce obligations to provide upstream prevention and assist a wider group of people; although the Government has pledged additional funding for LAs it is not yet known what individual Council's settlements will be. Consideration of how best to organise resources to respond to current and expected demand, heightened by the Act, will be central to formulating the Homelessness Strategy.

2. Introduction

Introduction

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires Local Authorities (LAs) to conduct a Homelessness Review to inform the development of their Homelessness Strategy. The previous Homelessness Review was conducted in 2012 and can be found on the Council's website⁴.
- 2.2 The Review considers:
- Key issues of homelessness affecting LBRuT;
 - Current and likely future levels of homelessness and homelessness trends in the Borough;
 - Services currently provided to prevent homelessness, to secure housing for homeless people and to provide them with support;
 - The resources available to the Council, other statutory organisations and voluntary organisations to provide services for homeless people.
- 2.3 The results of this review will form the basis of an updated Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 for the Borough. This will be adopted following the enactment of the Homelessness Reduction Act, due autumn 2017, in recognition of the significant impact that this Act will have on statutory services.
- 2.4 Progress made with tackling key homelessness issues is monitored via the annual Homelessness Strategy Action Plan which is updated twice yearly. Some of the key achievements of the 2012-2016 Homelessness Strategy are detailed below.

Key Achievements – Homelessness Strategy 2012 - 2016

- **Affordable Housing Supply** – There were 221 completed affordable homes between 2012/13 and 2015/16 partly supported by £5.57m of Housing Capital Programme (HCP) funding. As a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Council, LBRuT works closely with RPs such as RHP, PA Housing and Thames Valley to deliver these units of housing. These developments assist homeless households in the Borough by increasing the overall supply of affordable properties, thus relieving pressure from other sectors, such as the private rented sector (PRS). In addition, the Council has worked with RP partners, most notably RHP, to deliver 39 extensions to existing social rented stock, thus creating additional bedrooms and easing the problem of overcrowding in this tenure.

Year	Number of Completions	Housing Capital Programme Funding
2012/13	29	£1.12m
2013/14	57	£1.6m
2014/15	57	£2.05m
2015/16	78	£0.85m
2016/17	61	£0.5m

Table 1, Source: Council's own data

- **Homelessness Decisions and Acceptances** – Levels of homelessness decisions and acceptances have risen and fallen again since the previous Review and, positively, as at the

⁴ http://richmond.gov.uk/homelessness_review_2012.pdf

end of 2016/17 were lower than in 2011/12. Overall this has followed the London trend however the rate at which decisions and acceptances has fallen has been far quicker and started earlier than across London. Data on approaches is not held but it can be assumed that effective preventative services have also had an impact. The Homelessness Reduction Act will provide an opportunity to further strengthen prevention services within the Borough and improve on data around approaches and prevention.

- **Private Rented Sector Offers** – The Localism Act 2011 introduced measures to allow LAs to end their main homelessness duty through a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO). LBRuT was the first borough in England to regularly utilise this function which it supported through the extension of the Rent Deposit Scheme (RDS). This option gave the Council more flexibility in the accommodation offer for residents owed the main homelessness duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

Use of PRSOs has become less widespread following the 2015 *Nzolameso v City of Westminster* judgement which quashed the LA's decision to end their main homelessness duty following a rejection of a PRSO. Since the first full financial year since the implementation of the policy, the use of PRSOs in the Borough has fallen, with 68 discharges into the PRS in 2013/14 down to 6 in 2016/17. Providing that an offer is suitable and takes into consideration the household's particular circumstance, a reasonable PRSO can be made and the Council may look to increase use of this in the future.

- **Commissioning** – The Council commissions local charity SPEAR to provide a number of rough sleeping services including an outreach service, providing a housing accommodation pathway and meeting No Second Night Out (NSNO) commitments, staging post accommodation and reconnection. A comprehensive outreach service has enabled the Council and its partners to gain strong intelligence around the scale and nature of the rough sleeping problem in the Borough. In 2016/17 SPEAR helped over 551 people across all SPEAR services, and in Richmond alone 216 people through a combination of accommodation and other support services including supporting 167 rough sleepers into accommodation and providing 170 supported tenancies to homeless people. Overall, this is an increase from 2014/15 during which 130 rough sleepers were supported into accommodation and 81 tenancies were provided or brokered in LBRuT.

In 2015/16, LBRuT and SPEAR also successfully bid for funding to help support victims of domestic abuse in the Borough. This project aims to deliver trauma informed care interventions within a small hostel setting for single homeless women with multiple support needs related to their experience of domestic abuse. This project received further funding via a joint Community Safety and SPEAR bid for a DCLG fund.

- **Welfare Reform** – In 2012/13, the Council's Housing Options team undertook a homelessness prevention project aimed at mitigating the potential effects of the welfare reform agenda. By anticipating future LHA shortfalls the team worked with families due to be affected, preventing financial hardship and potential homelessness for 749 households. The work included budgeting assistance, signposting to RCAB's debt advice service, benefits advice and rehousing residents. Early intervention work was undertaken by the same team to assist households identified as potentially affected by the introduction of the benefit cap in 2013/14.

Monitoring the continuing rollout of Universal Credit (UC) since its introduction in 2013 has also helped residents of the Borough avoid financial hardship and potential homelessness.

Digital and financial support was then successfully mapped to better understand and identify gaps in provision.

- **Young People** – There has been a significant decrease in the number of 16/17 year olds presenting and being accepted as homeless since the previous Homelessness Review identified that LBRuT was accepting a notably higher proportion of people from this age cohort than the London average. This was achieved through joint working between Housing, Targeted Youth Support, Youth Offending Team, Community Adolescent Mental Health Service and other youth services. In addition, a joint working protocol was developed in 2014/15 between Housing Options and the children’s services provider for Richmond, Achieving for Children (AfC). As a result of this work, statutory homeless acceptance figures among 16/17 year olds in the Borough have reduced from 39 cases in 2010/11 to 9 in 2016/17.
- **SPEAR Pathway Model** – The Council continues to work in conjunction with SPEAR to develop a pathway model which aims to take a holistic approach to homelessness in the Borough and aid homeless households in maintaining accommodation. In addition to a helpline, which takes approximately 2000 calls per annum, rough sleeper outreach services (working with 60 cases at any time) and providing temporary accommodation (TA) (comprising 55 hostel bed spaces, 62 shared and 32 independent housing units), there are a number of long term support services including employment training and tenancy sustainment support. In 2016/17 161 clients took up some form of additional support such as training. More detail on the pathway and outcomes for engaged rough sleepers is found in the *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping* chapter.
- **Mental Health and Housing Protocols** – Driven by the Tenants’ Champion, the Council developed two joint working protocols between organisations providing mental health, housing and homelessness services in 2014/15. The Homelessness Prevention and Hospital Discharge (Mental Health) Protocol⁵ aims to prevent homelessness, particularly amongst existing social housing tenants, and minimise delays to the discharge process. The Mental Health and Housing Joint Working Protocol⁶ was introduced to improve information sharing and joint working between signatories. Signatories to the protocols include the Council, South West London and St George’s Mental Health Trust (SWLSG), SPEAR, the Richmond Wellbeing Service, RHP, PA Housing, L&Q, Thames Valley, Metropolitan and Change Grow Live (which supports people with substance misuse issues). In the review process, these signatories highlighted that joint working improved upon the introduction of the protocols and the Council is currently updating the documents to reflect changes to the provision of mental health services. There was a minimal increase in acceptances due to a mental health problem from 20 people in 2014/15 to 11 in 2016/17; having only implemented the Protocols in 2014/15 it is too early to ascertain whether they have contributed to reduced numbers of evictions and/or abandonments of tenancies. This will be monitored and will feed into any further work around reviewing the Protocols and mental health services in general.

Review Methodology

2.5 The Review document has been developed through:

- Analysis of data from a number of sources, including P1E returns (Government returns on homelessness prevention and relief), RDS records, the Richmond Housing Register,

⁵ http://richmond.gov.uk/mental_health_hospital_discharge_protocol.pdf

⁶ http://richmond.gov.uk/mental_health_joint_working_protocol.pdf

Affordable Housing Delivery statistics, Government departments (such as the Ministry of Justice) and local partners.

- Mapping of homelessness services in the Borough.
- Consultation with key LA Officers with expertise in homelessness and its prevention.
- Consultation with a number of key stakeholders in the Borough on homelessness issues.
- Information from wider resident consultation events on issues around housing and homelessness.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.6 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on authorities to consider the ways in which the objectives of the Review can be achieved by the LA and other organisations working together; best practice recommends that the review is the product of consultation with partners and local stakeholders. The *Consultation* chapter details an exercise undertaken in preparation of this Review whereby partner agencies were asked to complete a questionnaire addressing issues around homelessness in the Borough. Feedback from local agencies, many of whom have been actively involved in the Richmond Homelessness Forum, has informed the Council's understanding of local homelessness issues and how it responds to local needs. Consultation has also helped the Council recognise what is being done well and where improvements can be made.
- 2.7 No single agency or borough can eradicate homelessness but partnership working can have a significant impact. The Council works closely with partner organisations including SPEAR, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and RPs to address homelessness. Partnership working is vital to the delivery of the Homelessness Action Plan and has been recognised by successive governments as key to addressing homelessness. Collaborative working facilitates more effective targeting of finite resources and allows for different agencies to bring their particular expertise to a housing problem; by commissioning certain services the Council recognises that, whilst it must maintain responsibility for meeting statutory duties, additional services may be most effectively provided by partners, e.g. the continuing RCAB contract which ensures that residents have access to advice and support around a range of areas. Effective collaborative working with local partners is particularly crucial in light of the new duties contained in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which places a new duty on public bodies to refer homeless households and those threatened with homelessness to the LA.
- 2.8 Since the previous Homelessness Review, the transfer of responsibilities for public health has come to the Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) has been created. The Board allows the CCG, police, public health, social care, local councillors, borough representatives and local delivery partners to intervene earlier to tackle underlying problems and to ensure that those at risk of homelessness and/or violence and harassment have access to integrated and responsive services. This partnership identifies opportunities for collaboration and integration across agencies, and develops direct links to service users, patients and local stakeholders.
- 2.9 The Council undertakes information gathering through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to inform provision of health, social care and other support, including around homelessness, and identifies the strategic direction of service delivery to meet those needs. The Homeless Health Needs Assessment⁷ identifies the health needs of the Borough's homeless population, appraises current service delivery against best practice and aims to

⁷ <http://www.datarich.info/jsna/wider-determinants-of-health/homelessness>

understand the causes of homelessness in order to inform prevention work by health services. The Council's previous Homelessness Action Plan planned to, *'ensure the JSNA incorporates a homelessness section and that the forthcoming Health and Wellbeing Board considers homelessness and health issues.'* LBRuT's JSNA 2016/17 recognised this need and recommends to, *'work with stakeholders to clarify responsibilities for monitoring health needs of homeless people and the role of public health within the Council.'* The housing service has also fed into JSNA newsletters to raise awareness of the health needs of homeless people⁸. The Council continues to support SPEAR to provide the Homeless Health Link service which focuses specifically on improving the physical and mental health of rough sleepers and former rough sleepers (this is described in detail in *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping*).

- 2.10 The Council continues to operate a Homelessness Forum, bringing together representatives from all statutory and voluntary agencies that have an interest in enhancing housing provisions and preventing homelessness across Richmond. The Homelessness Forum provides a useful means for sharing information and best practice. Membership of the Forum provides a vehicle for collaborative working in a cohesive and coordinated approach. This is reflected in the terms of references, which includes, *'promoting the voluntary, community and social housing sectors involvement in homelessness issues within the Borough.'*
- 2.11 As well as maintaining a strong partnership with the local voluntary sector, the Housing Service has close working relationships with other sections of the Council including Housing Benefit (HB), Children's Services (provided by AfC), Planning, Environmental Health and Legal.

⁸ <http://www.datarich.info/resource/view?resourceId=643>

3. Policy and Legislative Context

National Context

- 3.1 **National and Local homelessness trends** – Having risen steadily from 2011/12, statutory homelessness across England appears to have recently begun a gradual decline. The number of homeless applications and number of acceptances made during quarter four of 2016/17 were 2% lower and 1% lower respectively than during the same quarter in 2015/16 marking a reversal of the upward trend in the two years leading up to 2016⁹. The trend across London reflects this, where homelessness decisions rose from 26,830 in 2011/12 to 32,276 in 2013/14, before gradually falling year-on-year to 29,650 in 2016/17. Whilst the LBRuT has followed this trend, the decline began sooner and has been far greater than across London. There has been a reduction in the number of decisions and acceptances since 2012/13, from 582 to 319 in 2016/17. It appears therefore that the socio-economic make-up of the Borough, along with effective prevention services, has contributed to lower levels of homelessness than is average across London; this is discussed in detail in *Statutory Homelessness*. It should be noted that the termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) remains the most common principle reason for homelessness, accounting for 29% of applications across England. In these cases prevention of homelessness can be particularly difficult and the pressures on local authorities remain substantial.
- 3.2 **Austerity, economic downturn and EU referendum** – The current Government committed to reducing the deficit when entering power in 2015. As part of the Autumn Spending Review 2015, the former Chancellor announced that there would be further reforms to the welfare system which would seek to save £12 billion a year by 2019/20. In addition, the Local Government Financial Settlement 2016/17 saw larger than anticipated cuts to Richmond Council's funding¹⁰ with a 66% reduction in Government support to the Borough by 2019/20 (the national average reduction was 33.4% and the London average was 32.2%). Since the UK's vote to leave the European Union (EU) in June 2016 and the instatement of Theresa May as Prime Minister, the new Chancellor has announced that the target to clear the deficit by 2020 has been dropped and there will be a move towards more fiscal measures. To this end, the Autumn Statement 2016 included new fiscal targets which aim for 2% underlying deficit and debt falling by 2020, and a balanced budget as soon as possible thereafter. There are no plans to introduce further welfare savings, although current programmes will continue. UC claimants will see their benefit payments reduce at a slower rate when they are working; for every £1 earned after tax above an income threshold, claimants will now keep 37p rather than 35p. Public spending within LAs has not been increased however and it is expected that current budget restrictions will continue.
- 3.3 There is a need therefore for the Council to consider how best to structure homelessness services as a result of declining resources and how to draw in additional income to compensate for the loss of more mainstream funding. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 will necessitate a review of services and consideration of how best to target resources. As a starting point, the Council should ensure that the best possible use is made of existing resources such as the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) fund which can present an effective prevention tool.

⁹ http://www.homeless.org.uk/sites/default/files/site-attachments/Statutory%20homelessness%20Q1%202017%20Analysis_0.pdf

¹⁰ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/budget_book_2016_17.pdf

National Policy

- 3.4 **The Housing White Paper 2017 – *Fixing our Broken Housing Market***¹¹, the housing white paper released in February 2017 set out the Government’s proposals to encourage house building and facilitate 200,000 new home owners by 2020. Key points included amendments to plans for Starter Homes (outlined in *Accommodation Services*), allowing LAs to issue completion notices demanding developers to begin building within two years, rather than three, once planning permission is gained, an expectation for LAs to use land more efficiently by building at greater density and consulting on the principle of a standardised way of calculating housing demand, with each LA mandated to produce a realistic plan and review it every five years.
- 3.5 **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**¹² - The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was given Royal Assent in March 2017. The Act represents a significant departure from existing homelessness legislation, amending the Housing Act 1996 to place a greater emphasis on LAs taking preventative measures to address homelessness before it occurs and strengthening the provisions for households not in priority need. New duties to assess, prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, regardless of priority need, will mean a significant change to the work LAs currently do with non-priority need households. All applicants, regardless of whether they will be owed the full statutory duty, must be provided with a personalised housing plan, devised in conjunction with the LA, which sets out the reasonable steps which the LA and applicant agree to take in order to prevent or relieve homelessness. The Act also widens the definition of homelessness by changing the point at which a person is classed as being threatened with homelessness from 28 days before a person is likely to be homeless, to 56 days. In addition, in most cases an applicant will be treated as homeless from the date at which a valid section 21 or section 8 notice expires, rather than from the date at which a bailiff executes an eviction warrant. The Act contains a new duty on other public bodies to refer homeless households and those at risk of becoming homeless to the LA and there is a need therefore to work with local agencies to establish effective referral routes and to strengthen collaborative working.
- 3.6 In recognition that the Act presents a new burden on LAs, the Government has announced that around £61 million will be available to LAs in England to meet the costs of implementation under the New Burdens doctrine. Funding allocations were announced in October 2017 with Richmond receiving a total allocation of £281,050 over 2017/18 – 2019/20. The Council must consider how to utilise this additional funding to organise services to best respond to new demand whilst continuing to meet existing statutory duties. This will necessitate additional staffing within the Housing Options and Advice service as well as a culture shift to bed down enhanced services for applicants not in priority need. Staff within the service have received training on the Act from the National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) which provides technical advice to LAs on issues around homelessness.
- 3.7 **Housing and Planning Act 2016 and extension of Right to Buy** – The Housing and Planning Act 2016 brings a number of policy changes, including the extension of the Right to Buy (RTB) to Registered Providers (RPs), introduction of social housing 1% year on year rent reduction, cessation of lifetime tenancies, measures to tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector and regulations to streamline planning policies to increase the delivery of homes. Some elements of the Act have since been amended, most notably ‘pay to stay’ being voluntary rather than a compulsory policy. RPs and LAs are permitted to introduce it however it is expected that the vast majority will not due to the costs of implementation and

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

¹² <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/homelessnessreduction.html>

administration and the additional financial burden this will place on tenants. In addition, the extension of RTB looks unlikely to result in significant numbers of RP homes being sold; only 1.6% of households involved in the Government's pilot bought their home. Although there may be a longitudinal impact upon housing supply if the RTB extension does prove popular, it will not have a direct impact on lets in the short term.

3.8 The Care Act 2014 – Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities must ensure that people who have care needs and live in their areas:

- Receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs;
- Can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support;
- Have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from.

The Care Act 2014 defines housing as a “health-related service”, highlighting the need for integrating care and support provision. To meet these needs the local authority must provide a range of housing and support services to meet a range of needs, through residential care, supported housing and extra care housing.

3.9 Welfare Reform – The Welfare Reform Act 2012¹³ introduced significant changes to the benefits system including new caps on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and HB, the formation of UC and the reform of Council Tax Benefit and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The Government has continued this programme with the implementation of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016¹⁴. The Acts aim to support people back to work and strengthen the incentive to gain employment, restore fairness and remove complexities in the benefits system.

Residents of high rent areas such as LBRuT are disproportionately affected by the benefit cap and changes to LHA rates, particularly larger families. Prior to the benefit cap being lowered in November 2016, there were 55 households affected by the cap; since having been lowered to £23,000 for families and £15,410 for single people, numbers affected in LBRuT have risen to between 130 and 140. The Welfare Reform Team identified 749 households due to experience a benefit reduction because of LHA caps and carried out targeted work with them to address this before reaching the stage at which they were facing homelessness. The risk of homelessness is heightened for these groups due to both a reduction in benefit paid and also uncertainty amongst private rented sector (PRS) landlords around the implications of UC which is intended to replicate a monthly salary so requires the claimant to budget for monthly payments and pass on the housing element of UC to their landlord. Despite this, homelessness in the Borough has not risen so it appears that preventative work undertaken by the Council and its partners to alleviate the potential effects of the reforms has been effective. Access to the PRS is likely to have been impacted however; landlords have been seen to withdraw from the LHA market as caps mean that in high rent areas market rates far exceed benefit entitlement. Whilst the Council can use tools such as DHP to top-up LHA / HB in the short-term this is not a sustainable solution and a more long-term strategic approach involving local partners is needed to maintain access to this sector.

3.10 Localism Act 2011 and Private Rented Sector Offers – The Localism Act 2011¹⁵ allows LAs more flexibility when managing and allocating accommodation, by providing them with the

¹³ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/5/pdfs/ukpga_20120005_en.pdf

¹⁴ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/7/pdfs/ukpga_20160007_en.pdf

¹⁵ www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1896534.pdf

option to introduce flexible fixed-term tenancies, and giving greater flexibility when allocating social housing and operating waiting lists. It also enables authorities to cease their homelessness duty through a PRSO for those who apply after November 2012. The Act aims to enable LAs to better manage demand and access to housing within the context of local circumstances. The Council acknowledges the positive role private market rentals have in providing stable homes to low income households and have been able to utilise this vital sector.

- 3.11 **The National Planning Policy Framework** – The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was introduced in 2012, setting out the desired process that should be followed to promote sustainable developments, while allowing Councils to develop Local Plans which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. The NPPF highlights the SHMA, which was carried out in Richmond in 2016, as a key piece of evidence in determining housing needs. The SHMA identifies the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures, which the local population is likely to need.
- 3.12 **Homelessness Act 2002**¹⁶ – This Act asks each LA to develop a Homelessness Strategy every five years based upon a review of homelessness within the area, ensuring a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness. The Act also strengthens the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories, and emphasises the need for joint working between authorities and relevant partners.

Local Context

- 3.13 **Corporate Objectives** – The LBRuT’s Corporate Plan for 2016-19¹⁷ outlines three overarching aims for the Council:
- To transform local public services through partnership and collaboration through its community leadership role;
 - To build community capacity to enable residents and communities to take greater control over their lives and to shape and where appropriate deliver local services;
 - To act primarily as a strategic commissioning body with a reduced role in service delivery.
- 3.14 There is a strong emphasis on collaboration and an appreciation of the benefits of working with local partners in the community. Related to this is the Council’s role as facilitator of residents and communities taking control over their own lives. In terms of homelessness, there should be a strong link to employment and a key aim of the homelessness strategy should be to ensure that services are targeted as appropriate towards enabling people to gain employment, taking a holistic approach to homelessness. The Council works with partners to deliver this, for example through the commissioning of SPEAR’s employment services and the CAB contract; this should be maintained and strengthened in the future. The Corporate Plan was reviewed in 2017 to include an objective on the delivery of affordable housing, making this a key priority.
- 3.15 The Borough’s Village Plans¹⁸ and related events are key examples of how the Council, in its listening role, engages with the local community to help shape local service delivery. Affordable housing offers are a key component of Village Plans and the Council should

¹⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/7/section/3>

¹⁷ http://richmond.gov.uk/corporate_plan

¹⁸ http://richmond.gov.uk/village_plans

continue to ensure that the planning on affordable development is closely related to specific local areas.

- 3.16 **Shared Staffing Arrangement (SSA)** – A single staffing structure across the London boroughs of Richmond upon Thames and Wandsworth was implemented between September 2016 and March 2017. The councils continue to be separate sovereign bodies with their own elected Councillors, Cabinets and Leaders, maintaining their distinct identities and retaining the ability to develop policies and priorities that matter to their local residents.
- 3.17 **Local Plan** – The Council’s pre-publication Local Plan¹⁹ sets out how the key issues facing the Borough will be delivered. It outlines how the Council will protect local character by enhancing and maintaining village areas, protecting the Borough’s parks and open spaces and ensuring that new developments and public spaces are of high quality design. It also highlights how the Council will deliver a sustainable future by requiring high levels of sustainable design and construction, maximising available resources through developing previously developed land and encouraging improvements in air quality. The third key issue which is addressed is that of meeting people’s needs, which the Council will deliver by protecting and securing new facilities and services, ensuring that there is sufficient education and training provision to reduce inequality and support the local economy and working to ensure that there is a suitable mix and stock size of housing in the Borough to meet local needs.

The pre-publication Local Plan also sets out the Spatial Strategy for the Borough. This prioritises family sized accommodation, particularly within the residential areas, and identifies the Borough’s centres, such as Richmond and Twickenham, as the areas where it would be appropriate to have higher proportions of smaller units.

- 3.18 **Allocations Policy** – The Localism Act 2011 enabled LAs to devise allocations policies appropriate to the local area. The Council’s Allocations Policy²⁰ was came into effect in 2017 which provided an opportunity to align Richmond and Wandsworth policies where possible, as part of the Shared Staffing Arrangement (SSA), and make best use of stock available. The Policy now includes an annual Allocations Plan, which allows for the opportunity to consider competing and relative priorities for the distribution of properties becoming available for letting and to set the framework on a yearly basis, and includes providing reasonable preference to those homeless and/or those owed one or other duty under homelessness provisions.
- 3.19 As necessary the Allocations Policy is amended to reflect case law. It has therefore had regard to two recent cases: the London Borough Hammersmith and Fulham’s decision to not regard accepted homeless households as qualifying persons under their scheme, providing the household was in ‘suitable’ temporary accommodation; and the London Borough Ealing’s decision to refuse an applicant otherwise falling within the reasonable preference categories as not being a qualifying person because they did not have the minimum period of previous residence in the borough. The Court of Appeal and the High Court, respectively, ruled that the scheme in each borough was unlawful.
- 3.20 **The London Mayor and the General London Assembly** – The last London Housing Strategy (LHS)²¹ was published by the previous Mayor of London in 2014. The Strategy emphasises the importance of increasing supply of housing, and sets out a long term target of delivering 42,000 new homes per annum, of which at least 17,000 should be affordable, and a further

¹⁹ http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/docs/LocalPlan/local_plan_pre-publication.pdf

²⁰ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/housing_allocations_policy.pdf

²¹ www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing_strategy_2014_report_lowresfa.pdf

15,000 affordable homes delivered per annum during the 2015-18 investment round. The LHS encourages LAs to make use of flexibilities provided by the Localism Act and to utilise the PRS as a means to meet the needs of homeless residents. It also outlines the Mayor's rough sleeping priorities from which a mayoral rough sleeping group was established. Objectives include minimising the number of new rough sleepers, No Second Night Out, no-one living on the streets and no-one returning to the streets.

3.21 Sadiq Khan was instated as the new Mayor of London in May 2016 and has committed to build upon the above targets in his manifesto²². This focuses on young people facing homelessness, coordinating councils to find stable private rented housing, and discouraging boroughs from competing for PRS homes by outbidding each other. The Mayor set up a 'No Nights Sleeping Rough' taskforce in October 2016 in an effort to prevent rough sleeping²³. In September 2017 the Mayor released a new draft London Housing Strategy, which is currently under consultation. It sets out five priorities:

- Building Homes for Londoners
- Delivering Genuinely Affordable Homes
- High Quality Homes and Inclusive Neighbourhoods
- A Fairer Deal for Private Renters and Leaseholder
- Tackling Homelessness and helping Rough Sleepers

3.22 The proposals include identifying and releasing more land for housing, increasing grants to support new housing targets, working towards half of new homes in London being affordable and improving conditions in the private rented sector. Significant pledges relating to homelessness include the intention to lobby to reform private renting and review welfare changes including for 18-21 year olds; provide a package of interventions to tackle homelessness caused by violence against women and girls; establishment of a No Nights Sleeping Rough Taskforce to support rough sleepers off the streets; allocation of £8.5 million each year to fund pan-London rough sleeping services and making up to £30 million available to support the provision of hostel accommodation for single people.

3.23 The Mayor of London has also outlined a plan to tackle fuel poverty in the draft Fuel Poverty Action Plan, which was consulted on during autumn 2017 and will be published in 2018. The plan's proposed actions include:

- Boosting the incomes of people in fuel poverty in London by supporting benefits uptake campaigns, referral services and programmes that provide direct advice and support to the fuel poor.
- Increasing the energy efficiency of London's homes so they are better insulated and use less energy.
- Tendering for the delivery of an energy supply company, aiming to offer fairer energy bills to Londoners as soon as possible.

Future Potential Risks

3.24 **LHA Cap for Single Under-35s** – In the Government's Autumn Spending Review 2015, it was announced that HB for single social housing tenants under the age of 35 will be capped at a market level shared room rate from April 2018; this will apply to all tenancies signed from April 2016. Homelessness charity Shelter has raised concerns that this could lead to affordability issues for those affected and could result in people falling into arrears and potentially losing

²² http://www.sadiq.london/homes_for_londoners_manifesto

²³ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-khan-launches-rough-sleeping-taskforce>

their tenancies²⁴. The Council's own analysis estimates that between 16 and 50 tenants will be affected by the policy change by April 2018, with another 25 potentially affected by 2018/19. Single people affected by the LHA cap in a one bedroom property will face a weekly shortfall ranging from £30 to £42 per week, with the majority facing shortfalls of around £40 per week. There are exemptions which mirror those in the PRS, including including care leavers up to the age of 22 and some disabled people.

- 3.25 Supported Housing Consultation** – Between November 2016 and February 2017 the Government consulted on changes to the funding model for supported housing. Key proposals are that core rent will be paid for out of LHA / UC up to cap levels only and that, recognising the higher costs of supported accommodation, shortfalls may be covered by funding devolved to LAs. There are concerns around how the new burdens of a commissioned service will be administered and the costs of that administration and also how the high costs of supported accommodation will be met. There need to be transitional arrangements in place to ensure that no current scheme is made unviable as a result of funding changes; partner RPs have identified current schemes where service charge costs are above the LHA cap, with significant weekly shortfalls of between £70 and £79 per person. Budget assumptions therefore must be based on genuine costs in order that the LA can cover shortfalls where necessary. The new funding model is due to be implemented in April 2019; the Council responded to the consultation setting out its concerns and suggestions for how funding may be devolved most effectively. Latest information available is that funding for supported housing is protected for the current parliamentary term however the longer-term future of funding remains uncertain.
- 3.26 End of Automatic Entitlement for out-of-work 18-21s** – In April 2017²⁵ the Government removed automatic entitlement of the housing element of UC for 18-21 year-olds who are out of work. Although the policy is effective from April 2017, in Richmond this will come into force with full service UC, in March 2018. Exemptions have been identified for parents, vulnerable young people, those who may not be able to return home to live with their parents, and those who have been in work for six months prior to making a claim, who will continue to be able to receive housing support for up to six months while they look for work. Concerns have been raised that the policy could mean that younger people who can no longer continue to live at their family home become homeless.
- 3.27 Universal Credit Rollout** – Full service UC is due to be implemented in LBRuT in June 2018. One of the concerns surrounding UC is that the payment will be made to claimants every four weeks to replicate the way in which a salary is paid. Many of those claiming benefits are accustomed to receiving payments every two weeks so there will need to be a level of education and support around budgeting on a monthly basis. IT support will also be necessary for some claimants because of the requirement to apply for this benefit online. In addition, the housing element of UC will be paid directly to tenants rather than landlords, which means that there is an increased risk of rent arrears accruing. Research by the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) and the National Federation of Arm's Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) found that, on the whole, UC claimants' rent arrears rose after they started to claim the benefit²⁶. The standard six week waiting time for a first payment to be received once a claim is made has resulted in issues with rent arrears where UC is already in place. These issues have led to concerns that as the UC rollout continues, there could be an

²⁴ Webb, K (2016) *Details still needed on social housing benefit limits*. Available from:

<http://blog.shelter.org.uk/2016/02/details-still-needed-on-social-housing-benefit-limits/>

²⁵ House of Commons Library (2015) *Housing Benefit: withdrawing entitlement from 18-21 year olds*. Available from: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06473>

²⁶ ARCH & NFA (2016) *Universal Credit - One Year On*. Available from: http://www.almos.org.uk/guidance_docs.php?subtypeid=458

increase in the number of tenants in rent arrears which could lead to an increase in evictions and homelessness. The Council and its partners need to consider how best to support UC claimants as the rollout continues; the contract with RCAB will be key to this, as will advice provided by Richmond AID (RAID).

EMERGING FINDINGS

National Context

- Over the period since the last Homelessness Review, levels of homelessness rose both locally and nationally but have since started to decline. The reduction in LBRuT has been more rapid than across London and England however, indicating that the Council and its partners have been successful in providing effective prevention services and responding to potential challenges, including welfare reforms.
- Prompt adoption of PRSOs has also served to help alleviate levels of homelessness, by securing settled accommodation in the PRS for households who would otherwise have progressed to making a Part VII homelessness application. The Council should consider how to work with PRS landlords in sourcing suitable accommodation in order that this function is used effectively.
- The Council's Welfare Reform team identified and engaged with 749 households due to be affected by LHA caps to prevent homelessness. Similar work is necessary in order to provide a robust response to future planned reforms, most notably the extension of the under-35 shared accommodation rate to the social sector and the ending of automatic entitlement to HB for 18 – 21 year olds. The Council must ensure that, following restructures brought about by the SSA, it maintains a strong role in mitigating the potential negative effects of changes to welfare benefits. Related to this is the need to maintain strong links with local partners who are key in providing advice and support to the community.

National Policy

- The Homelessness Reduction Act represents is of great significance in terms of how LAs discharge their statutory homelessness duties. By widening the criteria of homelessness and providing more structured support to applicants, in the form of individual plans, regardless of their priority need status, the Act is likely to have the effect of an increased demand on housing advice services and the Council must consider how best to prepare for this. This includes planning and organising services to ensure that it is prepared for the new duties brought about by the Act. Although the Government has pledged additional funding to finance this new burden, the Council may have to consider how to divert funding from elsewhere in order to meet these new responsibilities. The Council's strong links with local stakeholders mean that it is well placed to lead a joined-up response to the Act, working collaboratively with statutory and voluntary partners to enhance upstream prevention; this is crucial to formulating a robust response to the new duties contained in the Act.

4. Borough Profile

Overview

- 4.1 The Borough covers an area of 5,095 hectares (14,591 acres) in south west London and comprises a group of urban areas based on former villages, divided by the Thames and interspersed by large areas of open space. The 14 village areas, designated after consultation with local residents, each have a village plan. The Borough contains 18 electoral wards.



Demographics

- 4.2 The population of LBRuT at the last census in 2011 was 187,000. The current population is estimated to be 197,825²⁷, a 5.7% increase since 2011.

Age

- 4.3 Compared with London, the Borough has a lower proportion of people aged 20-24 (4.2% in LBRuT compared to 6.5% in London) and 25-29 (5.4% in LBRuT compared with 9.4% in London)²⁸. Overall, LBRuT has a smaller percentage of the population aged between 10 and 34 than across London and a higher percentage of the population aged 49 and over. This reflects that LBRuT is an attractive place to live for families with children and older people, while the high embedded land values and relative affluence can mean that it is difficult for young people to move into the Borough.

Affluence and Deprivations

- 4.4 The Borough is ranked 296 out of 326 local authorities in England, where 1 is the most deprived. It is the least deprived of all 33 London Boroughs.ⁱ There are no areas in the Borough

²⁷ London Datastore

²⁸ ONS, London Datastore (2016)

ranked in the most deprived decile of local authorities in England i.e. the 10% most deprived areas. However, there are small pockets of deprivation across the Borough and one small area, in the ward of Hampton North in the far south west of the Borough, falls into the second 20% most deprived small areas in England. This is significant as in 2010 no areas fell within the 20% most deprived in the country²⁹.

- 4.5 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2016/17, reviewing national Indices of Deprivation data from the DCLG, found that there are marked variations in levels of affluence within wards containing both areas of great affluence and also pockets of disadvantage.
- 4.6 Areas containing pockets of relative disadvantage (as identified by the Indices of Deprivation, DCLG 2015) include Heathfield, Whitton, Barnes, Mortlake and Barnes Common, Ham, Petersham and Richmond Riverside, West Twickenham, Hampton North and Hampton wards. The Council does not believe it right to designate areas as “areas of deprivation”, however its Uplift Strategy is focussed on improving these areas. These areas also correspond to areas containing higher proportions of social housing in the Borough.

Unemployment and Economic Inactivity

- 4.7 The Borough has the fifth lowest percentage of 16-64 year olds claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) at 0.8%, compared to the Greater London average of 1.2%³⁰. The Borough also has the lowest rate of 16-64 year olds claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA)³¹ in London (excluding the City of London) at 28.7 per 1000 people of working age, compared to London at 47.3 per 1000³².

²⁹ DataRich (2015) *The Index of Multiple Deprivation*

³⁰ DWP (2017)

³¹ ESA is a benefit for those whose illness or disability affects their ability to carry out work. Claimants are still required to go to interviews and meet an adviser to support a claimant back into work.

³² London Datastore (2016)

5. Housing Market

Overview

- 5.1 The dominant tenure in LBRuT is owner occupation (67%), with the Borough having the fifth highest ownership rates out of the 33 London boroughs and third highest of those who own their home outright, according to Census 2011 data. The proportion of the population in the social rented sector is the fourth lowest in London with just 11% of the population in this sector. The Borough also has the eighth lowest proportion of the population in the PRS in London.

Area	Owned outright	Owned with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership	Social rented	Private rented or living rent free
LBRuT	26%	41%	11%	22%
London	18%	32%	23%	27%

Table 2, Source: Census 2011

- 5.2 The prevalence of owner occupation is likely to have contributed to relatively low levels of homelessness. However, whilst the interrelated areas of resident demographics and housing market trends, combined with effective targeted prevention work, appear to have minimised homelessness relative to other London boroughs, the prevention and relief of homelessness remains a key objective of the Councils and its partners. In addition, the relatively small PRS and social rented market serves to restrict access to these forms of housing for residents who are not able to access owner occupation (which, as outlined below, will be the majority of low to middle income earners given the very high house prices in the Borough).

Private Rented Sector

- 5.3 Renting in the private sector offers little in the way of security of tenure and the termination of ASTs is the most common reason for homelessness among homeless acceptances with 35% of acceptances citing this reason in 2016/17. After owner occupation, the second most common tenure in the Borough is the PRS with 22% of the population renting privately. LBRuT has the 11th highest private sector rent levels in London and the highest in Outer London according to Valuation Office Agency (VOA) statistics for 2016/17³³.

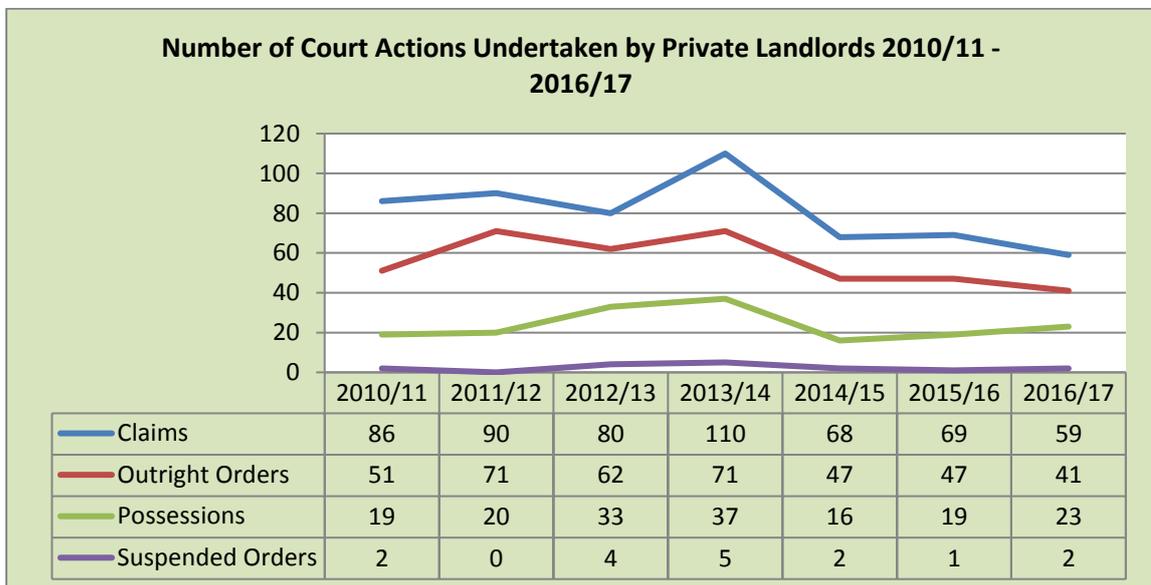
Bedroom size	Median Rent PCM	Comparison*
Room	£630	2 nd highest in Outer London
Studio	£900	2 nd highest in Outer London
1 Bed	£1,200	2 nd highest in Outer London
2 Bed	£1,500	Joint-highest in Outer London
3 bed	£1,900	Highest in Outer London
4 bed or more	£3,100	Highest in Outer London

*There are 19 Outer London boroughs

Table 3, Source: VOA

³³ VOA (2017) *Private rental market summary statistics: April 2016 to March 2017*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-april-2016-to-march-2017>

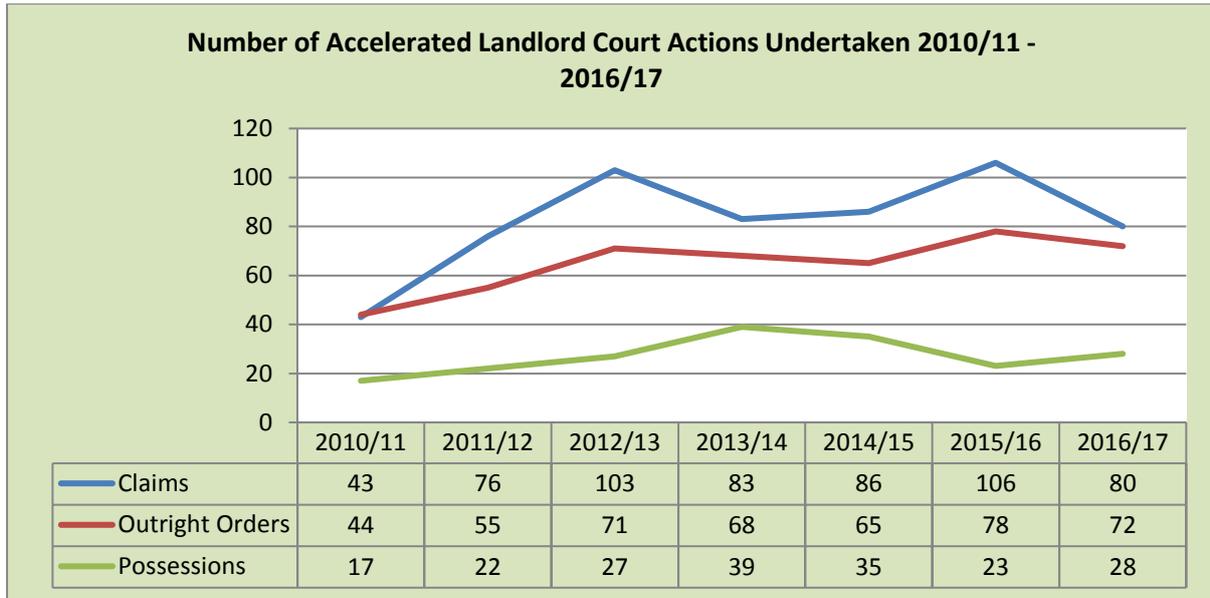
- 5.4 The proportion of properties in the PRS available at LHA levels highlights the issue of affordability in the private sector. LHA levels are set at the 30th percentile of market rents in a local area, meaning HB should be capped at a level which would make 30% of properties in an area affordable for benefit claimants. Research commissioned by the Borough in 2012³⁴ found that this was not the case however, with only 11.8% of one bedroom, 7.4% of two bedroom, 5.7% of three bedroom and 1.7% of four or more bedroom adverts at LHA levels. In addition, even if market rates were set at the 50th percentile, the Benefit Cap would have the effect of limiting HB at below rent levels in many cases. This highlights the difficulty residents who are dependent on HB face in accessing and maintaining accommodation in the PRS.
- 5.5 As shown in graph 1 below, the number of private landlord court actions has fluctuated between 2010/11 and 2016/17 but has fallen from 158 to 125 overall, reaching a peak of 223 in 2013/14. The number of outright orders granted followed a similar trend as well, rising between 2010/11 and 2013/14, from 51 to 71, and then falling back down to 41 in 2016/17. It may be that, following an initial wave of welfare reforms which impacted upon PRS tenants, this sector is settling.



Graph 1, Source: MoJ Data

- 5.6 Accelerated landlord evictions are usually quicker than normal evictions and there is no legal defence to these proceedings unless the S21 notice has been incorrectly served. They can also be used by both private and social landlords for ASTs, which means that the data cannot be definitively split into each of these categories but ASTs have been offered by default in the PRS since 1997. Graph 2 shows that the number of accelerated landlord actions has increased significantly from 104 in 2010/11 to 180 in 2016/17. This is potentially reflective of the increase in the proportion of homeless households from the PRS, a trend that has developed over this time period.

³⁴ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/tenancy_strategy_evidence_base_2012.pdf

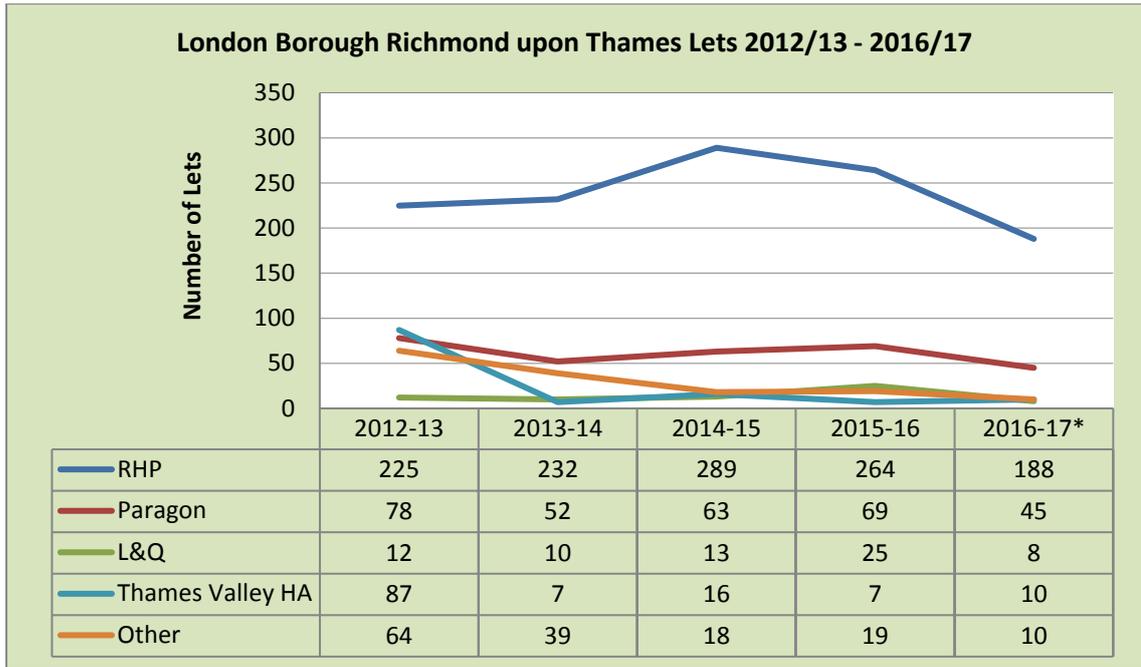


Graph 2, Source: MoJ Data

Registered Providers

- 5.7 Since the Council transferred its social housing stock to RHP via a large scale voluntary transfer in 2000, social housing in the Borough has been owned by RPs. RHP is the largest with a stock of 6,255 social rented homes, followed by Paragon with 1,703, L&Q with 605 and Thames Valley with 328³⁵. These four RPs account for 89% of the 9,947 socially rented homes in the Borough.
- 5.8 The vast majority of the Council’s nominations are made to the four largest RPs in the Borough. Between 2010/11 and 2015/16, 89% of the Council’s successful nominations were to a property owned by one of these four RPs and this rose to 99% in 2015/16. It is positive to note that the Council and its local RPs are maintaining numbers of lettings; in 2015/16 nominations to RHP and Paragon were 264 and 69 respectively. Turnover amongst RHP stock was 3.8% and for Paragon was 4.1% which represents a strong performance. As a benchmark, turnover in WBC in 2015/16 was 4.0% for Council-owned stock and 3.0% for local RP stock. Nevertheless, the Council should work with its partners to consider how lettings can be maintained and where possible strengthened through moves within stock, for example by facilitating under occupation transfers and extending existing stock (see *Accommodation Services*).

³⁵ HCA (2017) *Statistical Data Return 2016 to 2017*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistical-data-return-2016-to-2017>

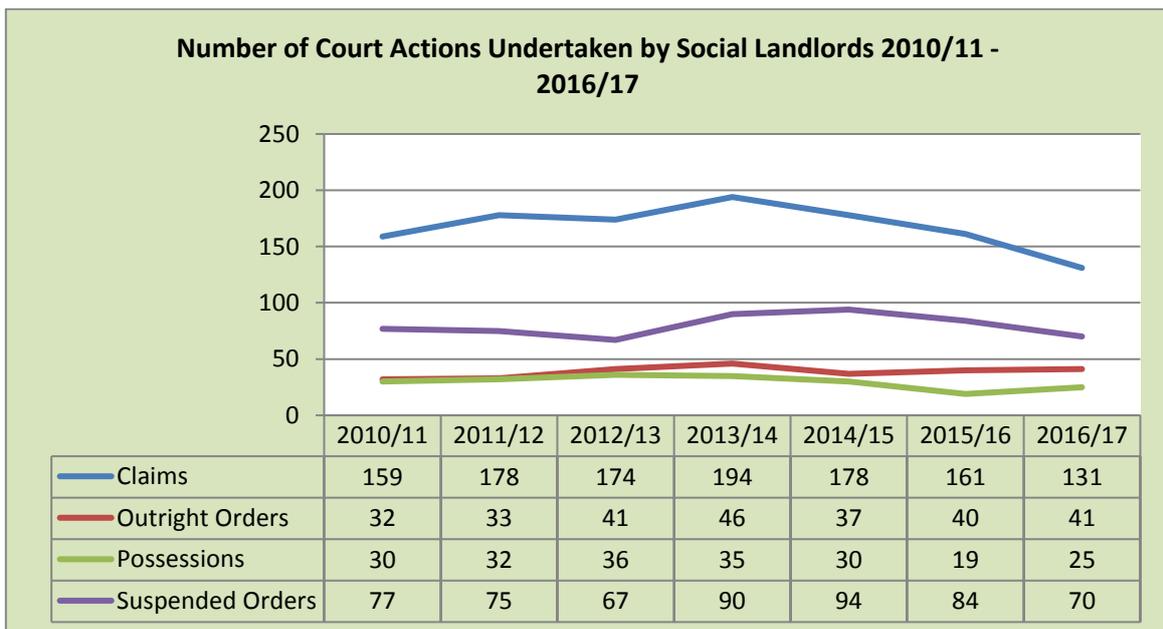


Graph 3, Source: Council's own data

*Note: 2016/17 figures are as at Q3, hence drop-off

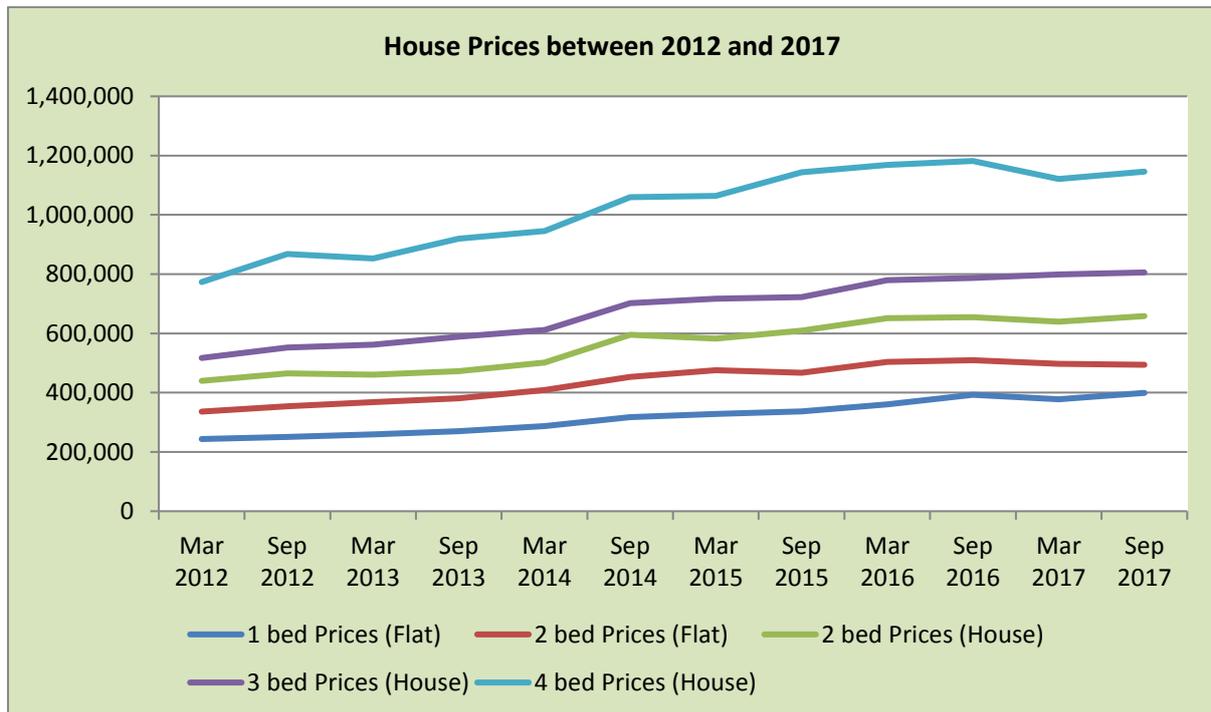
5.9 The number of social landlord court actions has remained fairly static over recent years, starting at 298 in 2010/11, rising to 365 in 2013/14 and falling again to 267 in 2016/17. These individual action types followed the same pattern of rising between 2010/11 and 2013/14, before falling back down in 2015/16. The number of suspended orders is especially high for social landlords compared to other tenure types as these are often used to implement a plan for arrears to be repaid or anti-social behaviour (ASB) to stop before repossessing a property.

5.10 Relatively low and declining numbers of possession actions within the social rented sector means that this does not present a significant cause for concern in terms of homelessness because of this reason (homelessness from RP accommodation was the primary reason for homelessness for only one acceptance in 2016/17).



Owner Occupation

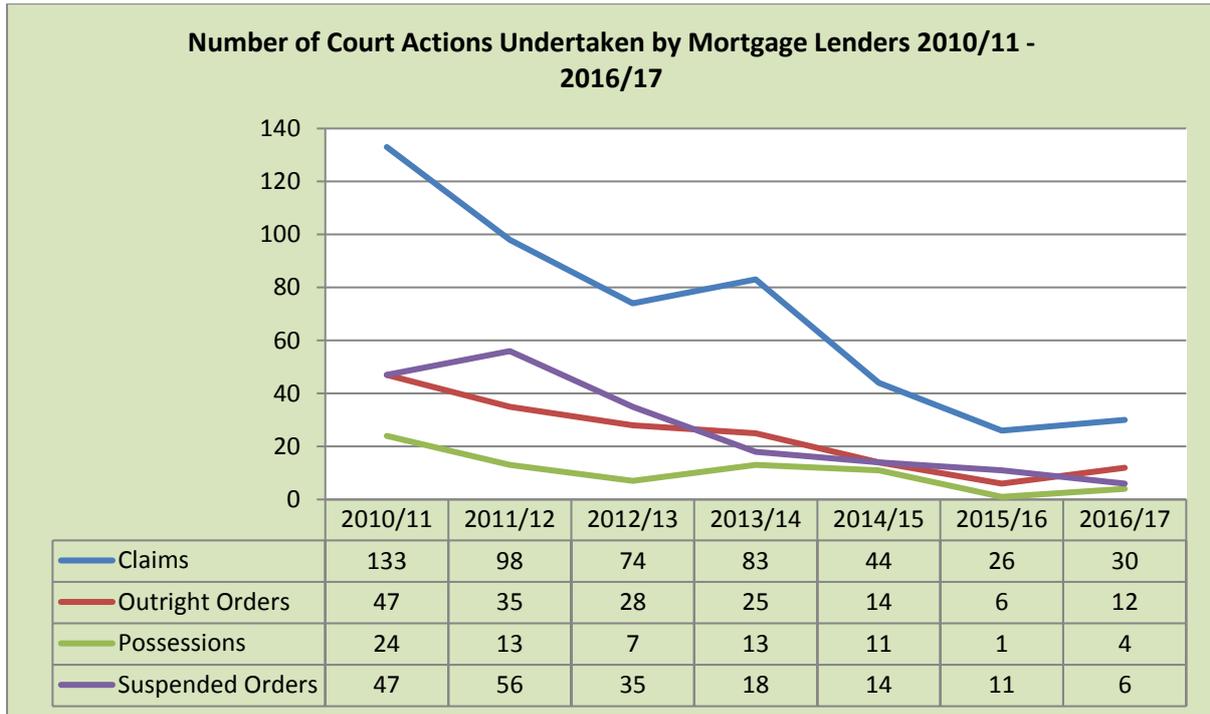
5.11 House prices in the Borough have been steadily increasing year-on-year since 2012. The average price for a three bedroom house, for example, has risen from £517,000 in March 2012 to approximately £805,700 in September 2017, which represents an increase of 56%. Affordability is defined as the house price being no more than 3.5 times household income. In 2015 one quarter of households in the Borough had incomes of less than £30,000 and a further quarter of between £30,000 and £50,000. The median income was £51,200 (this was partially distorted by a high proportion – 19% - earning over £100,000). Thus, owner occupation is unaffordable for the majority of the Borough. More in-depth analysis of the housing market in LBRuT is available in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)³⁶.



Graph 5, Source: Hometrack

5.12 Repossession due to non-payment of mortgage arrears is one of the main reasons why people in this tenure become homeless. There are, however, a very low number of mortgage actions and homeless acceptances given the relatively high proportion of the population who are owner occupiers. Mortgage court actions are generally initiated by lenders and would largely be as a result of mortgage arrears. Graph 6 shows that the number of each type of action taken by mortgage lenders has declined overall between 2010/11 and 2016/17, from 251 to 52. These low figures are reflected in the number of cases which are accepted as homeless with the primary reason for homelessness being due to mortgage arrears, with just ten accepted households citing this reason between 2010/11 and 2016/17 according to P1E data.

³⁶ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/housing_market_assessment_draft_report_june_2016.pdf



Graph 6, Source: MoJ Data

Emerging Findings

The Private Rented Sector

- High and rising house prices means that maintaining access to the PRS is crucial in providing appropriate housing options for the many residents for whom owner occupation will remain unaffordable for the foreseeable future. The difficulties in accessing a buoyant PRS market are likely to be heightened by the continued roll-out of UC, as landlords have been found to withdraw from the HB market in areas where UC has already been introduced, citing long delays before claimants receive payment which will not be paid directly to them. High rental costs in the PRS also impact on the Council’s ability to source affordable TA locally. Research by the University of Cambridge found that, of 8500 PRS properties advertised to rent in the Borough, only 11.8% of one bedroom, 7.4% of two bedroom, 5.7% of three bedroom, and 1.7% of four bedroom properties were advertised with rents at or below LHA rates. This indicates that, although affecting all household sizes, the issue of affordability is heightened for larger families.
- As part of preparations for the Homelessness Reduction Act the council will be considering how best to strengthen prevention services; the PRS will play an important role in this as both a vital resource into which homeless households can be rehoused and in terms of enhanced efforts to prevent homelessness from this sector. Strong partnership working will be key to unlocking access to this sector, for instance through collaboration with SPEAR who, as part of the DCLG rough sleeping funding, will dedicate resource towards improving links with local PRS landlords.

The Social Sector

- As well as improving access to the PRS, the Council and its partners need to consider how to maintain churn within the social rented sector. Turnover in RP stock has thus far been maintained but where possible should be increased, perhaps through a more targeted approach to encouraging under occupying households to move to appropriately sized accommodation and offering enhanced incentives to do so. The Council has recently commenced work to understand whether a DIY shared ownership scheme might be an

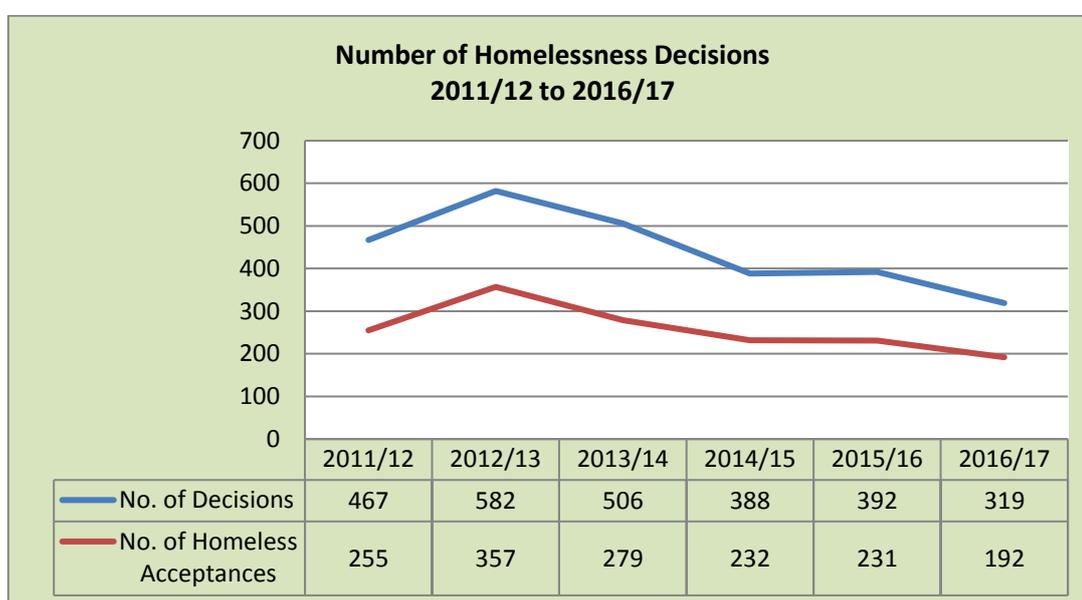
attractive offer for existing social tenants; if found to be viable this would enhance the housing options available and improve mobility between and within tenures.

6. Statutory Homelessness

Profile of Statutorily Homeless Households

Homelessness Decisions and Acceptances

- 6.1 The number of homelessness decisions has risen and fallen again over the period since the last Review. This reached its peak in 2012/13 when 582 decisions were made, compared to 319 in 2016/17. This may be due to caps on LHA which were introduced in 2012, although for many claimants a nine month transitional protection period meant that their benefit entitlement did not change until 2013. The number of homeless acceptances has followed a similar trend to that of homelessness decisions, rising to 357 in 2012/13 before falling year-on-year between 2012/13 and 2016/17 down to 192. As a proportion of all decisions, acceptances have largely remained stable, at 55% in 2011/12 and 60% in 2016/17.



Graph 7, Source: P1E Returns

- 6.2 When compared with the sub-region³⁷, LBRuT has the second lowest number of homelessness acceptances at 2.26 per 1,000 households. This is considerably lower than the London average of 5.03, as would be expected in line with the lower number of total decisions.

Local Authority	Number Homeless Acceptances per 1,000 households 2016/17
Croydon	6.63
Wandsworth	5.82
London (average)	5.03
Sutton	3.74
Kingston upon Thames	3.41
Richmond upon Thames	2.26
Merton	1.37

³⁷ The sub-region consists of the boroughs which make up the South London Partnership (Croydon, Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames and Sutton) and Wandsworth as an additional comparator in light of the Shared Staffing Arrangement between Richmond and Wandsworth.

Table 4, Source: P1E Returns

- 6.3 This largely follows the London trend where homelessness decisions rose from 26,830 in 2011/12 to 32,276 in 2013/14, before gradually falling year-on-year to 29,650 in 2016/17. However, it should be noted that the rate of decline is far greater in the Borough than in London, which has experienced a 45% drop between 2012/13 compared to an 8% fall across London since 2013/14. In addition, this figure is the fifth lowest out of 33 London boroughs (including City of London). This may be attributed partly to the demography and housing market of the Borough. LBRuT has one of the most affluent populations in London with the highest employment rate in the capital (79.6%), the second lowest proportion of the population claiming out of work benefits (4.7%) and the lowest rate of residents claiming HB (6.3 per 100)³⁸. Combined with tenure trends in the Borough – 67% owner occupation; 22% private rented and 11% social rented – this is likely to result in residents having the resources to sustain more stable housing.
- 6.4 Data on approaches is not held by the Council however it can be assumed that effective preventative services have also had an impact and consideration should be given as to how these can be maintained and strengthened in the future. SPEAR services may also contribute to lower than average levels of homelessness as their outreach work may divert some rough sleepers who would be found to be in priority need away from making a Part VII application, particularly as the accommodation pathway offered by SPEAR may be preferable to the accommodation options available to the Council meaning that rough sleepers choose to be assisted by SPEAR rather than approach the Council. It is not possible to quantify the extent of this but this has been reported anecdotally.
- 6.5 A recommendation for the future is that data on approaches to the Council is captured as this may provide a more accurate reflection of homelessness levels in the Borough. The Homelessness Reduction Act provides an opportunity to develop a framework which facilitates enhanced data collection.

Reasons for Homelessness

- 6.6 The most common reason for homelessness acceptances in 2016/17 was termination of an assured shorthold tenancy (AST), with this reason accounting for 35% (68 of 192) of cases. This is closely aligned with the trend for both the rest of London and the sub-region where 42% of cases cite this reason. The proportion of households citing this reason has increased year-on-year over the period since the last Review, highlighting the increasing difficulties in maintaining access to the PRS in the Borough and throughout London. However, as table 5 shows, in Q4 of 2016/17 the most common reason for homelessness in the Borough was ‘parents no longer willing to accommodate’; this was the most common reason for Q3 and Q4 of 2016/17, indicating a potential change in trend and a return to this as the most significant cause of homelessness, which was long the case prior to recent years. This is in contrast to the sub-region and to London as a whole, where termination of an AST remains the most significant cause of homelessness by some margin. It is interesting to note that sub-regional trend is very closely aligned with London overall and that LBRuT appears to be an anomaly within the local area.

³⁸ GLA (2016) *London Borough Profiles*. Available from: <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/london-borough-profiles/resource/80647ce7-14f3-4e31-b1cd-d5f7ea3553be>

- 6.7 The Council conducted analysis of the PRS and tenants' and landlords' experiences of it in LBRuT³⁹. This included a survey conducted between May and June 2015 focusing on landlords' reasons for ending ASTs. Landlords were asked to list the top three reasons for having ended an AST. Rent arrears was the most common reason, cited by 26 of the 75 landlords completing the survey, followed by disrepair issues (17) and selling the property (17). It is unsurprising that financial matters would feature heavily as the driver behind the ending of ASTs given the high rental and property prices in the Borough. These provide a strong impetus to landlords to sell their properties and high rents and LHA caps mean that the PRS is increasingly unaffordable to residents without a high income. Landlord withdrawal from the PRS market in response to welfare reforms further restricts this; a quarter of those surveyed do not let to tenants in receipt of LHA and 34% stated that they would consider this in certain circumstances (for instance, an existing tenant's circumstances changing, or if the tenant was in employment). Landlords' suggestions on how the Council might work with them to prevent eviction from the PRS included educating tenants on their responsibilities and financial assistance. These views should be taken into account when considering how access to the PRS might be maintained.

Primary Reason for Homelessness – Top 4 Q4 2016/17	LBRuT %	SLP+LBW %	London %
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	28%	16%	14%
Termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	21%	37%	35%
Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	15%	1%	2%
Violent breakdown of relationship, involving partner	8%	6%	5%

Table 5, Source: P1E Returns 2016/17

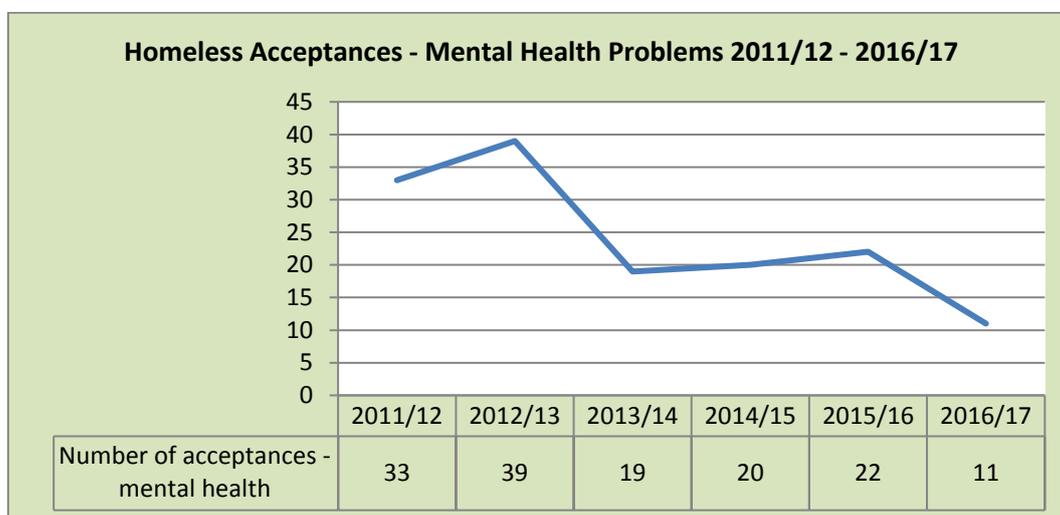
Priority Need Categories

- 6.8 Over two-thirds (69%) of homelessness acceptances in the Borough were deemed to be in priority need because the household included at least one dependent child during 2016/17. This is similar to the trend in London, where a total of 73% of acceptances were deemed to be in priority need because of dependent children in Q4 2016/17. Priority need because of vulnerability due a physical disability was the second most common category in LBRuT in 2016/17, accounting for 12% of accepted cases.
- 6.9 The fact that only 5% of accepted households were in priority need due to being 16/17 years old is indicative of the effective targeted work carried out since the previous Review which identified a relatively high rate of homelessness amongst this group (24% compared to a sub-regional average of 5%). Having identified homelessness amongst 16/17 year olds as a particular concern, a large case file review was undertaken which found that 79% had a history with statutory agencies such as social care or youth offending. A majority resided in the RP sector (58%) and 27% had a family history of homelessness. The Council strengthened joint working practices with AfC via the joint working protocol and worked with Targeted Youth Support to ensure that the causes of homelessness amongst this group were addressed. It is particularly positive to note the significant decrease of homelessness amongst 16/17 year olds, which is now in line with the sub-region and London.
- 6.10 It should be noted that data on priority need reason may not provide a true picture of additional vulnerabilities, particularly when the household includes dependent children and/or a pregnant woman. Given that these categories are far easier to ascertain than those relating to individual vulnerabilities and the fact that only one reason is recorded, this will often be

³⁹ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/homelessness_and_the_prs_research.pdf

used as the reason when there are other contributing factors. This is true of domestic abuse; victims often have children and, while the reason for homelessness may be recorded as violent breakdown of a relationship, this may not be reflected when recording the priority need reason.

6.11 People with mental health problems are likely to have complex needs which mean that successful rehousing, and subsequent tenancy sustainment, is difficult; this is discussed in greater detail in chapters 8 and 9. Following a sharp decline in number of acceptances due to a mental health problem in 2013/14, the number rose slightly before falling again in 2016/17. Of the 231 accepted homeless cases during 2015/16, 22 were in priority need due to a mental health problem which represented 9.5% of the overall caseload and was the third most common reason. It is positive to note therefore that this figure declined sharply in 2016/17 with only 11 (6%) acceptances due to a mental health problem. As discussed in the *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleepers* chapter however, mental health problems are a significant and increasing issue amongst the Borough’s rough sleepers with nearly 100% of SPEAR clients presenting with a mental health problem.



Graph 8, Source: P1E returns

6.12 Since the previous Review there has only been one instance of the Council accepting the full homelessness duty to someone for whom vulnerability as a result of being in the armed forces was the reason for priority need. This was in 2014/15.

6.13 However, the above figure belies the extent of housing problems for ex-service personnel. Between 2011 and 2014 SPEAR undertook a specialist veteran support programme⁴⁰, funded by the British Legion, which engaged around 140 local veterans over three years, 40 of whom were ex-Gurkhas. Of these, 21% of British veterans were rough sleeping, 33% British veterans and 55% of ex-Gurkhas were inappropriately housed (i.e. sofa surfing, overcrowded accommodation, etc.) and 52% of British veterans and 90% of ex-Gurkhas required some form of tenancy sustainment support. SPEAR successfully sustained new or existing tenancies for 94% and 92% of British veterans and ex-Gurkhas respectively.

6.14 Effective partnership working and targeted intervention which responds to the particular needs of ex-service personnel is essential in ensuring that this group has access to appropriate support. In 2010 the Government introduced the armed forces covenant, designed to ensure that serving and former armed services personnel have fair and adequate access to public

⁴⁰ <http://spearlondon.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Veterans-Brochure.pdf>

services. The Borough was one of the first in London to sign a community covenant giving greater assistance to servicemen and women and their families. The allocations policy was revised in 2012 to include a quota for local ex-armed forces personnel in housing need. The Council has also signed up to the pan London shared ownership scheme which prioritises ex-service personnel for low cost shared ownership. The Council should also ensure that strong links with local partners, particularly SPEAR, are maintained in order that the extent and nature of housing problems experienced by this group are addressed.

- 6.15 Homelessness and offending are often interlinked. Analysis published by the Ministry of Justice shows that individuals who reoffend are more likely to have been homeless or sleeping rough before entering prison⁴¹. Offenders who enter prison as homeless are more likely to be reconvicted one year after release than those in stable accommodation (79% compared with 47% in the first year after being released⁴²). Of those offenders questioned by the Ministry of Justice, 60% recognised ‘having a place to live’ as important to stopping them reoffending. The Work and Pensions Committee launched an inquiry in 2016 to look into employment and housing support available for offenders on release from prison⁴³. A number of high profile homeless charities provided responses highlighting the link between offending and homelessness. Since 2011/12 however, there have been only three cases where priority need has been due to vulnerability because of a history of being in prison or on remand (and 11 where the reason for homelessness is having left prison); very low numbers which do not raise particular concerns.

Reasonable Preference Categories

- 6.16 The Council’s new Allocations Scheme, reviewed as part of building the SSA, came into effect in February 2017. It includes the definitions of the reasonable preference categories as those who are homeless, owed a homeless duty⁴⁴, people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing, those who need to move on medical grounds and those who need to move to avoid hardship to themselves or others. These categories are explained in more detail in the Allocations Scheme document.
- 6.17 As at 1st October 2017 there were 3,670 households on the Borough’s housing register. With regards to reasonable preference categories, there were 1,119 cases on the waiting list with points for overcrowding, 245 with points for medical needs and 187 accepted homeless cases. The vast majority of the applications are for general needs housing.
- 6.18 An aspect of this demand can be met through moves, particularly for those households with points for overcrowding. The Allocations Policy significantly prioritises downsizers via the points system; moves by under-occupiers can facilitate a chain of beneficial moves and the Council should focus on how to harness this to achieve the best use of available stock.

⁴¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278806/homelessness-reoffending-prisoners.pdf

⁴² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/199224/compendium-of-reoffending-statistics-and-analysis.pdf

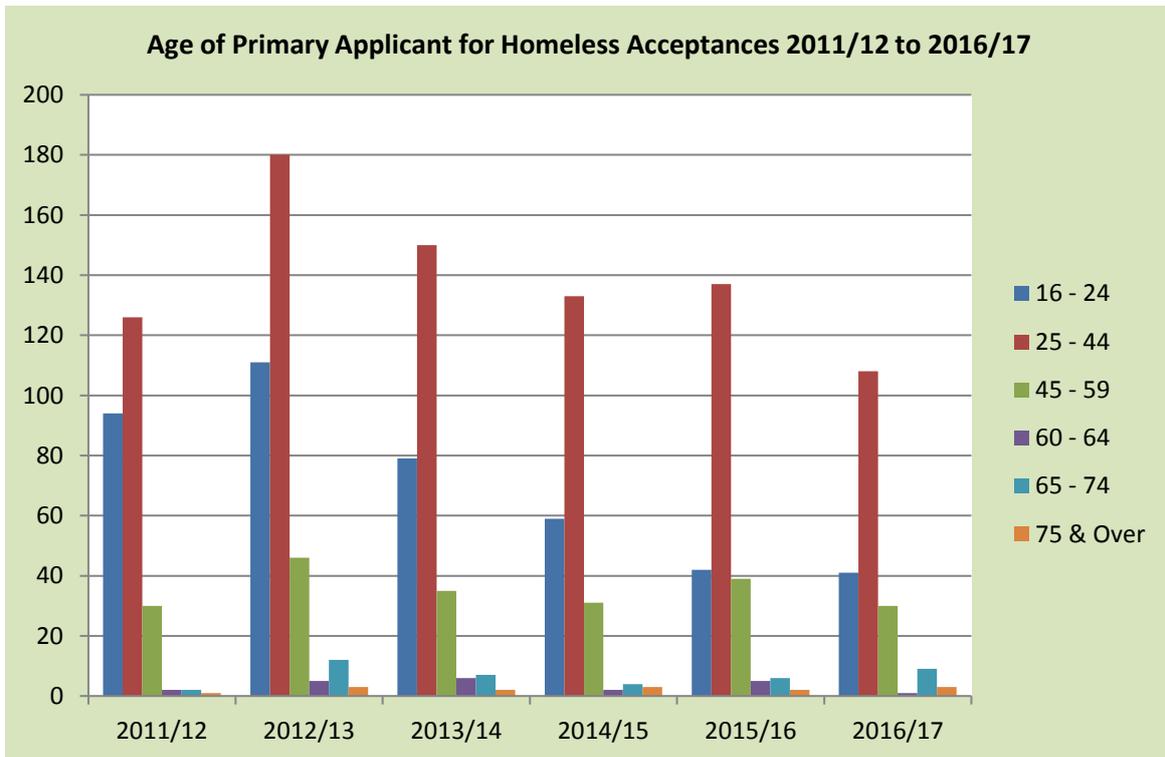
⁴³ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/ex-offenders-15-16/>

⁴⁴ Under the new scheme as of February 2017 accepted homeless duty cases no longer attract points as they are automatically placed on a preference queue.

Demography of Homeless Households

Age

- 6.19 For the last five years, the age group with the largest number of homeless acceptances is from the 25-44 years cohort. In 2016/17, there were 108 acceptances from this age group, accounting for 56% of those accepted as homeless. The next largest age cohort was the 16-24 age group which accounts for 21% of homeless acceptances, followed by the 45-59 age group band which accounts for 16% of acceptances. This is unsurprising given that the predominance of ‘household including dependent children’ as the main reason for priority need, as 25-44 year olds are more likely than any other age group to have dependent children.
- 6.20 The proportion of accepted cases aged 16-24 has fallen considerably since the last Homelessness Review (2012) which found that the 16-24 age group accounted for 57% of acceptances in the preceding three years. This was found to be an anomaly for the region but since the Review was published, the numbers and proportion of accepted cases aged 16-24 has fallen year-on-year in the Borough; as outlined above and in more detail in chapter 2, this is due to strengthened partnerships which have enabled effective prevention work with this age group.

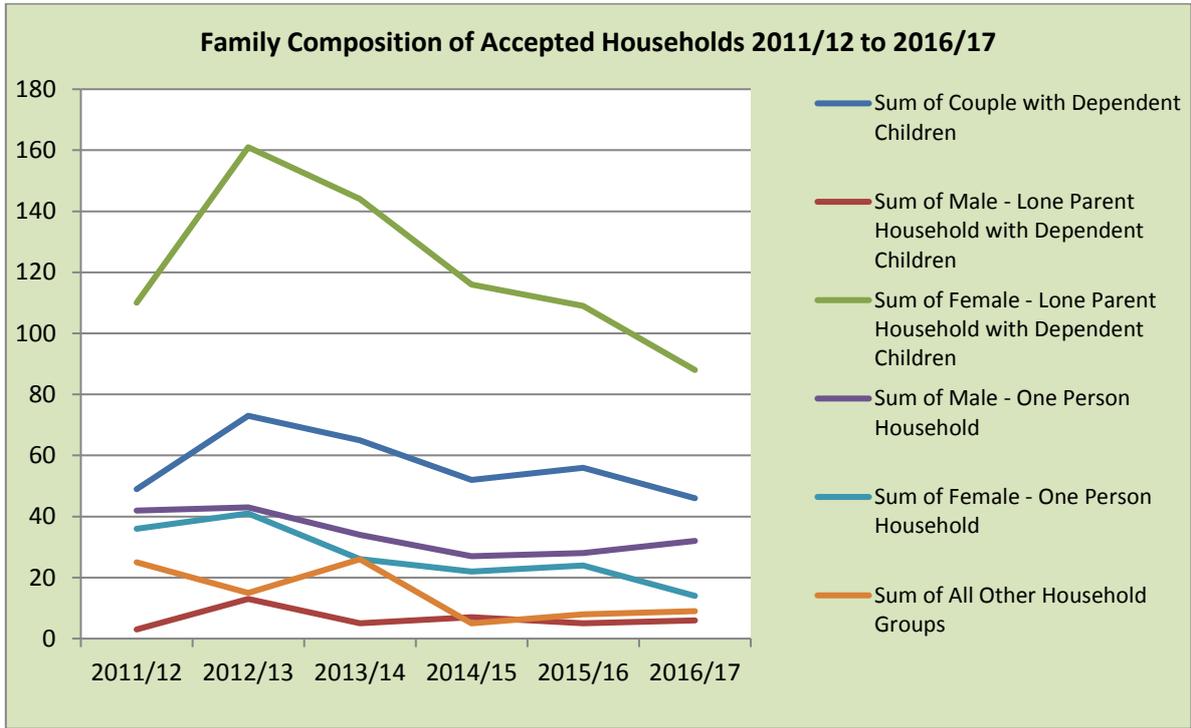


Graph 9, Source: P1E Returns

Composition

- 6.21 The highest proportion of those accepted as homeless in LBRuT were lone female parents who accounted for 46% of accepted households in 2016/17, a slight decrease from 52% in 2013/14. The majority of the other groups accepted as homeless have remained proportionately similar since 2013/14. In 2016/17, couples with dependent children accounted for 24% of accepted homeless households, one person male households accounted for 17% of homeless acceptances, followed by one person female households which accounted for 7% of accepted

households. Lone male parent households and other household groups both accounted for 3% of homeless acceptances respectively.



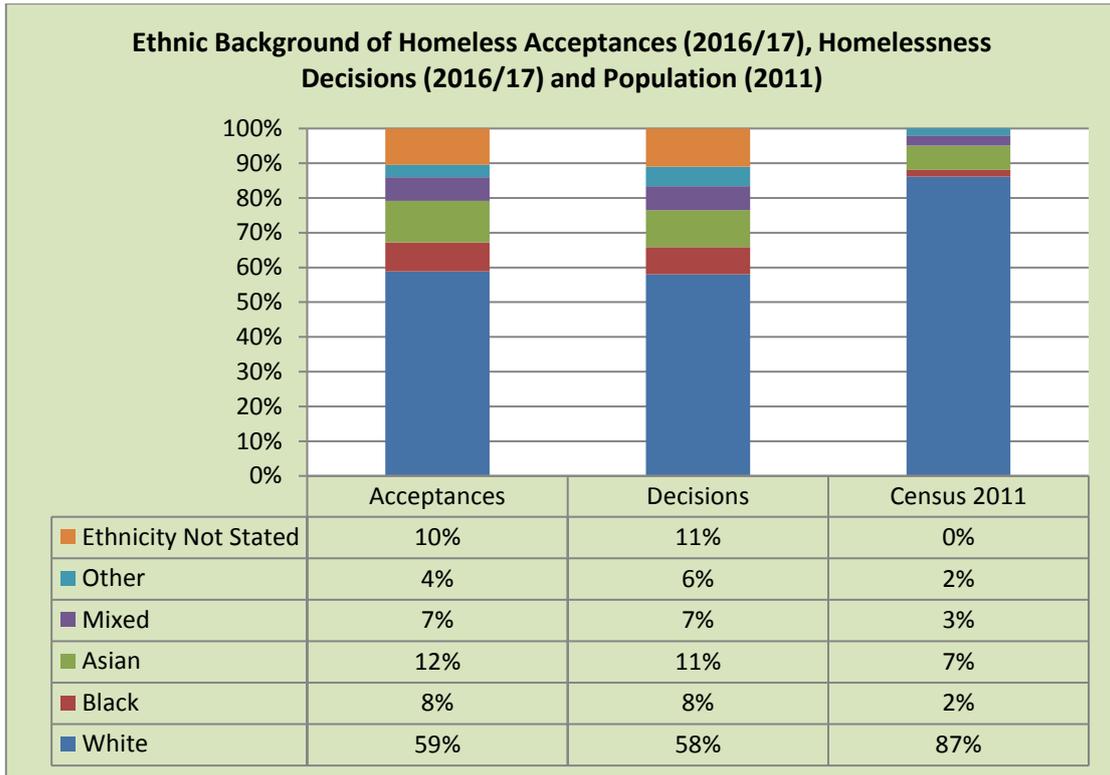
Graph 10, Source: P1E Returns

6.22 When comparing the household composition of accepted households, LBRuT is similar to the London as a whole. For example, in London in Q4 2016/17, lone female parents with dependent children made up 51% of accepted homeless cases compared to 56% in LBRuT. Similarly, couples with children make up the second largest group in both LBRuT and in Greater London.

6.23 The prevalence of lone female parents may present a problem in terms of worklessness and housing problems. This group may face additional challenges to gaining employment compared to, for instance, couples with dependent children which may make securing and sustaining housing difficult, particularly in light of welfare reforms.

Ethnicity

6.24 LBRuT has a predominantly White population with 87% of residents in this cohort. 7% of the Borough’s population is Asian, 3% identify as Mixed, whilst 2% is Black and 2% report their ethnic background as Other. This is in stark contrast to the London average where the proportion of the population from BME background is much greater with 38% of the population identifying as from a BME background compared to just 13% in LBRuT.

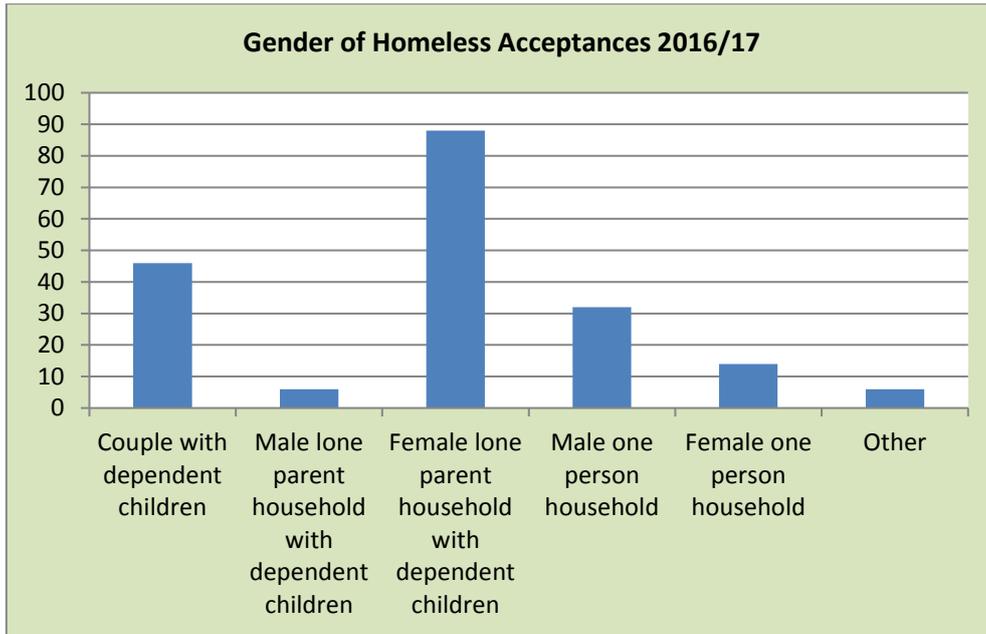


Graph 11, Source: P1E Returns; Census 2011

6.25 Households from a BME background were overrepresented in the cases accepted as homeless in LBRuT with 31% of homelessness acceptances being from individuals with a BME background in 2016/17. This is also the case across London where, in 2016/17, on average 60% of all homeless acceptances were from applicants identifying as from a BME background. Black households in particular were significantly overrepresented; 2011 Census data shows that 2% of the Borough’s population identifies as Black compared to 8% of homelessness decisions and 8% of acceptances made in 2016/17.

Gender

6.26 Data from the P1E returns shows that women were more likely than men to be accepted as statutorily homeless. 46% of homeless acceptances in 2016/17 were from households classified as female lone parents with dependent children whilst 7% were from female one person households. In comparison, only 3% of homeless acceptances were from male lone parents with dependent children and 17% from male one person households. These findings represent a common trend where lone female parents become the primary carers for dependent children after relationship breakdowns.



Graph 12, Source: P1E Returns

Household Size

6.27 Among homeless households demand for two bedroom accommodation is highest, with 60% of accepted homeless applicants registered on the housing queues as at October 2017 awaiting this size of accommodation. This should be borne in mind when considering how to maintain access to the PRS and to make best use of social stock in the Borough, for example through facilitating moves which free-up this size of accommodation. However, LBRuT historically has a higher proportion of bedsit and one bedroom RP stock, meaning that the delivery of larger family sized accommodation also remains an important balancing priority. Additionally, 28% of homeless applicants require three or more bedroom homes.

Bedroom need	Applicants registered as accepted Homeless
1	22
2	112
3	37
4	14
5+	2
Total	187

Table 6, Source: Council’s own data

Sexual Orientation

6.28 Data on sexual orientation is not reported in the P1E Returns but is collected by LBRuT. Of the cases between 2010/11 and 2015/16 where the lead applicant disclosed their sexual orientation, 94% of cases were listed as heterosexual, 3% as “other”, 1% as bisexual and 2% as gay or lesbian. These figures were broadly in line with national statistics, such as the

Integrated Household Survey which found that in 2014 93% of the British population identified as heterosexual, 1% as gay or lesbian, 1% as bisexual and 0.3% as “other”⁴⁵.

Homelessness and Disabilities

- 6.29 There were 33 accepted homelessness cases in LBRuT deemed to be in priority need due to a disability in 2016/17, which accounts for 17% of homeless acceptances for the year. Of these 11 were due to mental illness or disability and 22 were due to physical disabilities. This does not, however, include any cases from applicants with disabilities who were found to be in priority need under a different category.
- 6.30 People with physical disabilities may be more difficult than those without to secure suitable TA for. Available B&B accommodation is often not accessible to people with a disability meaning that the Council has to look to other sources, such as hotel accommodation with adapted rooms which is very expensive.
- 6.31 Whilst joint working has improved, there is a need particularly in light of new arrangements under the SSA to ensure that joint working protocols, such as the Mental Health and Housing Joint Working Protocol⁴⁶, are embedded within service delivery and that a joined-up approach is taken to working with this client group.

EMERGING FINDINGS

Decisions and Acceptances

- Although LBRuT has relatively low levels of homelessness when compared to London and the sub-region, there remains a continuing demand that the Council must consider and address. As at 1st October 2017 there were 3,670 households on the housing register and the high cost of market housing in the area means that people finding their own housing solutions may be limited. The Council’s primary duty in terms of homelessness is to statutorily homeless households although the Homelessness Reduction Act will widen this focus.
- It is positive to note that homelessness among 16/17 year olds has significantly reduced since the previous Homelessness Review when it was highlighted as an area of concern. In 2011/12 being 16/17 was the primary reason for priority need for 24% of acceptances, compared to 5% in 2016/17. Strong partnership working between the Council and AfC and the development of a joint working protocol which clearly set out accommodation pathways and referral routes has led to this success.

Reasons for Homelessness

- The most common reason for homelessness acceptances in 2016/17 was termination of an AST, with this reason accounting for 35% (68 of 192) of cases. This is closely aligned with the trend for both the rest of London and the sub-region where 42% of cases cite this reason. The proportion of households citing this reason has increased year-on-year over the period since the last Review (although Q3 and Q4 of 2016/17 saw parental eviction become the most common reason for homelessness). This highlights both the increasing difficulties in sustaining PRS accommodation for existing renters in light of welfare reforms and a still buoyant local rented market targeted at higher income professionals, and the need for the Council and its partners in the Borough to consider how best to maintain access to the PRS for more of its residents. Any approach will require effective prevention work and, following

⁴⁵ ONS (2015) *Sexual Identity by Region, UK*. Available from: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/referencetable04sexualidentitybyregionuk>

⁴⁶ http://richmond.gov.uk/mental_health_joint_working_protocol.pdf

the Homelessness Reduction Act, anyone at risk of homelessness, regardless of priority need status, will be entitled to some level of prevention support from the Council. The Homelessness Strategy should therefore set out how the Council plans to respond to this requirement.

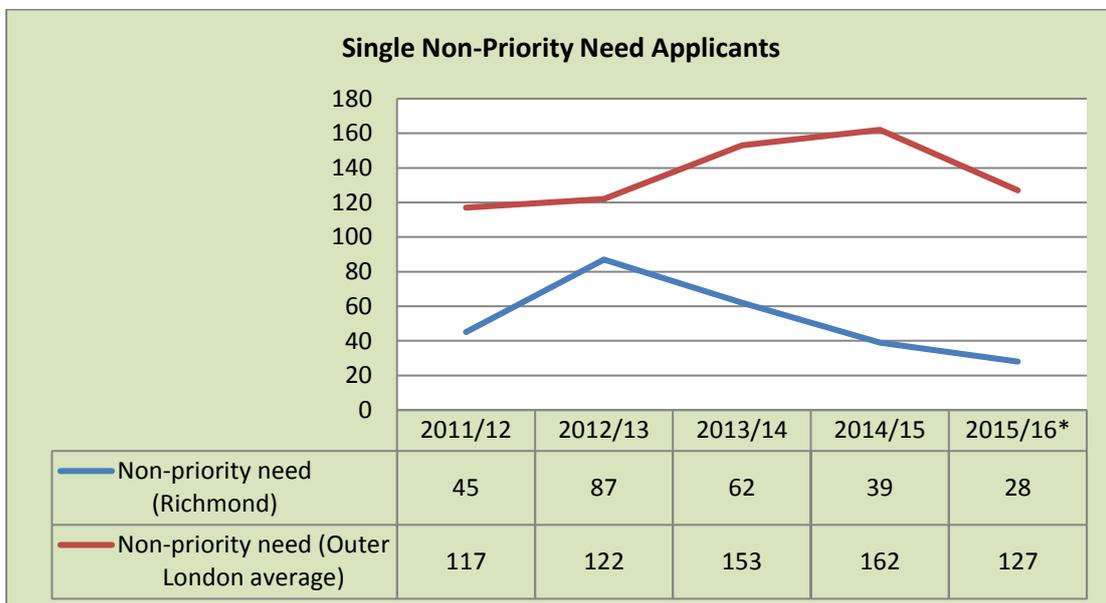
Sexual Orientation

- As was highlighted in the previous Homelessness Review, collection of sexual orientation data is not mandatory when a homeless application is made. Changes brought about by the SSA provide the opportunity to work to incorporate this as a mandatory field into the newly adopted IT system.

7. Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Single Homeless Households

7.1 The number of single homeless applicants with a non-priority need decision in LBRuT increased from 45 in 2011/12 to 87 in 2012/13, but then saw a year on year decline to 28 in 2015/16. The trend in the Borough differs to that observed across Outer London. As graph 13 shows, the number of non-priority need decisions rose across Outer London between 2012/13 and 2014/15, before decreasing since then. The differences observed in LBRuT can be partly explained by the relatively low numbers of decisions overall, which accounts for these figures being consistently lower than the Outer London average as would be expected. In addition, the decreasing number can potentially be explained by the strong service provision within the Borough for single homeless people, particularly those sleeping rough (as detailed below), which has contributed to this cohort increasingly presenting less to the Council due to their support needs being met elsewhere.



*Most recently available data

Graph 13, Source: P1E data / London datastore

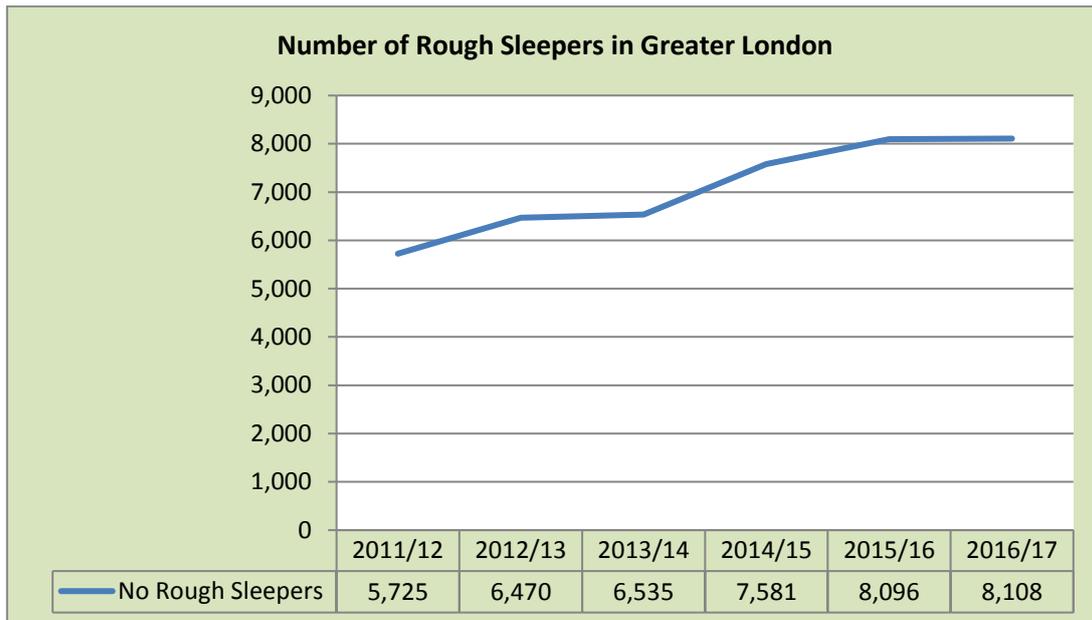
7.2 Of the 273 applicants with a decision of homeless but not priority need since April 2011, 70 appealed the decision. 15 appeals resulted in a change of decision while 55 upheld the original non-priority decision. Applicants in this situation are provided with advice and assistance which may include referral to hostels and to SPEAR for services, to refuges in cases of domestic abuse and the RDS.

7.3 The Homelessness Reduction Act will significantly enhance statutory provision for single homeless applicants by placing a duty on LAs to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants, regardless of whether they are in priority need. If enacted in its current form, LAs would be required, for a period of 56 days, to take steps to assist the applicant in maintaining or securing accommodation; these steps may include, for example, mediation to prevent family breakdown or providing a rent deposit.

Rough Sleeping

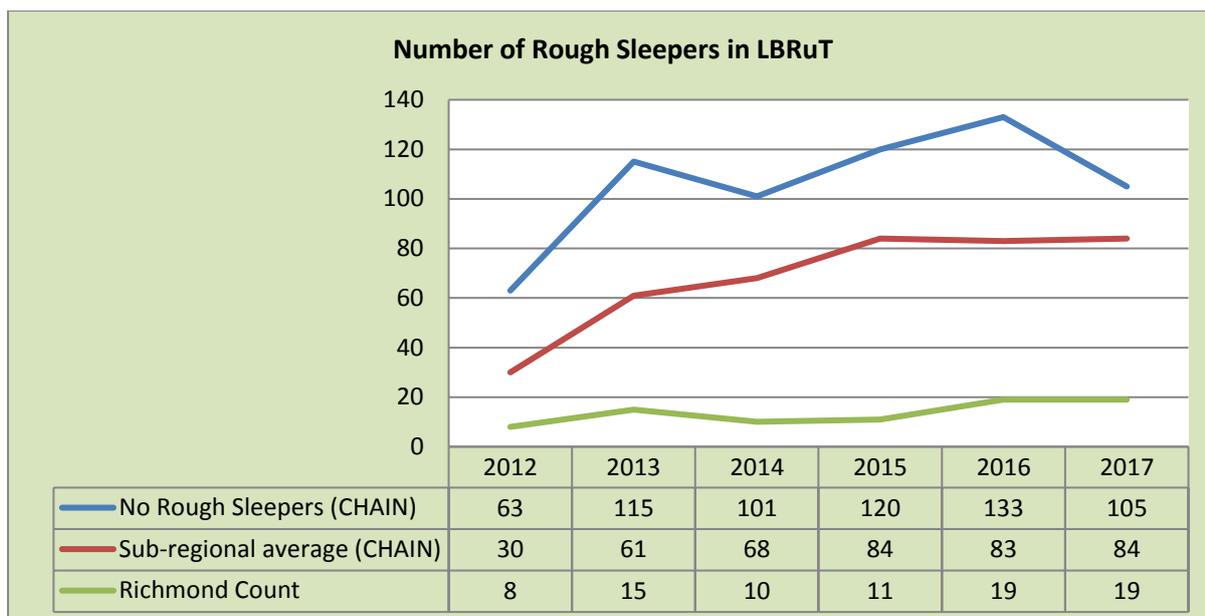
Trends and Profile of Rough Sleepers

- 7.4 CHAIN is a central database which enables the details of rough sleepers to be recorded by outreach teams and other agencies; annual CHAIN data refers to the number of rough sleepers verified over the course of that year. This is generally accepted to be the most accurate reflection of the scale of rough sleeping in an area and as such provides the statistical basis for this analysis of rough sleeping.
- 7.5 Across Greater London the number of rough sleepers has increased steadily over the period since the previous Homelessness Review. Since 2011/12 there has been a 42% increase from 5,725 to 8,108. Between 2013/14 and 2014/15 there was a 16% increase, however the rate of increase appears to have slowed since then and was 7% between 2014/15 and 2016/17.



Graph 14, Source: CHAIN and GLA Data store

- 7.6 Correspondingly, the number of rough sleepers in LBRuT has also increased over this period. The most notable increase was from 63 in 2011/12 to 115 in 2012/13. This figure increased again to 133 in 2015/16 but has fallen to 105 in 2016/17. The Council commissions SPEAR to undertake a count every year to correspond with the 'count night' across London organised by Homeless Link. This has also increased in line with CHAIN data; the autumn 2017 count found 19 rough sleepers bedded down, which is the same figure as 2016 but is an increase compared to 11 in 2015. It must be noted however that, although useful in providing a snapshot of people sleeping rough on one particular evening, the count may not provide an accurate reflection of rough sleeping.



Graph 15, Source: CHAIN and GLA Data store

7.7 Particular aspects of the LBRuT, such as the large amount of green space and relatively low crime, contributes to the relatively high numbers of rough sleepers in the Borough compared to the sub-regional average. Despite the average having been inflated due to consistently high numbers of rough sleepers in Croydon, figures for LBRuT have remained above this since 2011/12. The recent reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the Borough highlights the importance of maintaining local services targeted towards preventing and alleviating rough sleeping and the continuing need to evaluate and enhance provision; this is a longstanding priority for the Council. Council-commissioned services and those operated by partner agencies are detailed below.

Gender

7.8 The number of female rough sleepers increased between 2011/12 (9) and 2014/15 (26) before reducing slightly in 2015/16 (18) and 2016/17 (14). Women made up 20% of LBRuT’s rough sleepers in 2016/17, an increase since 2015/16 when this group accounted for 11% of rough sleepers notably higher than the 15% across Greater London. This was also the case during 2013/14 and 2014/15, when women made up 20% of rough sleepers compared to 13% and 14% across Greater London. The particular needs of female rough sleepers are outlined below.

Age

7.9 The table below details the age profile of LBRuT rough sleepers in 2016/17. Compared to the Outer London average LBRuT has a greater proportion of rough sleepers aged 46-55 (+6%) and 18-25 (+3%). It also has fewer rough sleepers aged 36-45 (-6%) and aged 55+ (-3%).

Age	Richmond upon Thames 2016/17	Outer London Average 2016/17
18-25	12%	9%
26-35	24%	25%
36-45	24%	30%
46-55	31%	25%
55+	9%	12%

Table 7, Source: CHAIN data

Rounded up or down to nearest %

Ethnicity

7.10 In LBRuT the majority of rough sleepers are White British (62%) which is significantly higher than the Greater London average of 28%. The second largest ethnic group is White Other (18%) but this is lower than the Greater London average of 36%. Rough sleeping amongst Asian residents (7%) is similar to the Greater London average (8%) whilst rough sleeping levels amongst Black residents (4%) is lower than the Greater London average (13%).

Nationality

7.11 In 2012/13 UK nationals made up nearly 77% of rough sleepers locally with Central and Eastern European (CEE) nationals making up the second largest group at 11.5%. The number of CEE nationals has dropped since then; in Q3 2016/17 of 32 newly verified rough sleepers, only one was a CEE national. As at February 2017, year to date figures were 105 newly verified rough sleepers with only two CEE nationals.

7.12 Compared to the Greater London average LBRuT has a significantly higher percentage of UK nationals rough sleeping (41% of London's rough sleepers in 2015/16) and a significantly lower percentage of CEE nationals which account for 37% London's rough sleeper population.

Needs of Rough Sleepers

- 7.13 A recent review of SPEAR's current client group within their supported housing demonstrates the complex nature of rough sleepers, finding;
- 96% of people living in SPEAR supported accommodation have a mental health issue, however more than half were not receiving any support from mental health services when SPEAR began working with them;
 - 60% have an alcohol or substance misuse issue;
 - 40% of clients have a recent history of offending;
 - 30% of clients have a significant physical health issue and the majority of these also have a mental health issue. 40% of this group were not receiving any treatment for their health condition when SPEAR started working with them;
 - 38% of clients had a debt problem;
 - 23% of clients had been the victim or the perpetrator of domestic violence.
- 7.14 While the review did not specifically highlight ex-armed forces personnel, the veteran support service operated by SPEAR from 2011 – 2014 found that this group had complex needs and often responded best to an holistic person-centred approach to addressing the reasons for their housing problems, requiring support to tackle mental and physical health problems, financial difficulties and to re-engage with civic life. This is described in more detail in chapter 3.
- 7.15 More information regarding the health issues affecting rough sleepers can be found on the JSNA website⁴⁷.
- 7.16 SPEAR report that the majority of the female rough sleepers that they work with need specialised support to address experiences of trauma, exploitation and violence. Often such

⁴⁷ www.richmond.gov.uk/jsna

experiences both led to these women sleeping rough as well as continuing to be a threat while they are living on the streets and overall they tend to be more vulnerable than male rough sleepers. The provision of women only accommodation, and specialist DV support is crucial to meeting the needs of this cohort.

7.17 Entrenched rough sleepers⁴⁸ are likely to have different, more complex needs, than others. These will be harder to engage with and will require more tailored intensive outreach work in order to progress through the accommodation pathway and off the streets long-term.

Services and Outcomes for Rough Sleepers

SPEAR Accommodation Pathway

7.18 The Council commissions SPEAR to operate a pathway model providing a range of accommodation and support services for rough sleepers. The different components of the pathway can be broadly categorised as: outreach; accommodation; and additional support. In 2015/16 SPEAR helped 500 people through a combination of accommodation and additional support services.

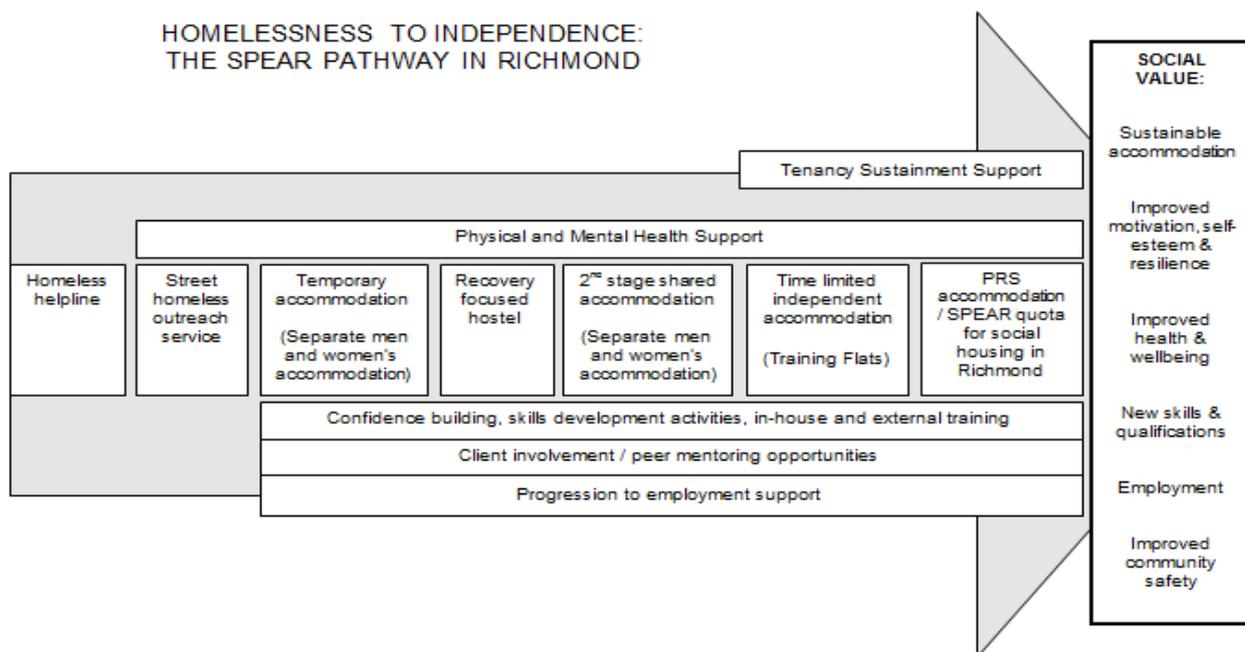


Figure 1, Source: SPEAR

Outreach

7.19 The outreach service acts as a gateway to support and also as a referral service. It has several components, all of which serve to provide basic advice, referral and act as a conduit to set up face-to-face assessment meetings. These include a drop-in service, a telephone advice line which takes approximately 2000 calls per year and an online self-referral.

⁴⁸ Entrenched rough sleeping is defined by the GLA as: someone who has been seen rough sleeping in the last three months and/or has stayed in a London rough sleeping hostel in the last three months and has been seen rough sleeping at least six times over the last two years

- 7.20 SPEAR provide three to four physical outreach shifts per week and handle approximately 60 cases at any given time, although the number fluctuates depending on demand. Key tasks include verifying new rough sleepers, assessing need and risks, linking into other services such as the Homeless Health Link Service and sourcing accommodation via the SPEAR accommodation pathway, NSNO or other options. They also carry out welfare checks on entrenched rough sleepers and assist with benefit claims. The service works effectively in partnership with other agencies including CMHTs, council housing and social care, police and courts and immigration services, as well as providing support and key work sessions to some clients whilst still rough sleeping.
- 7.21 In 2016/17 the outreach service supported 90 rough sleepers into accommodation and provided 170 supported tenancies across the pathway.

Accommodation

- 7.22 The pathway model provides accommodation options ranging from emergency hostel beds to PRS and social rented accommodation. In 2016/17 SPEAR accessed 36 hostel bed spaces, 61 shared and 30 independent housing units. The complex needs of rough sleepers, as outlined above, are met through intensive support provided particularly to those in the recovery focused hostel, a 14 bed unit specifically for rough sleepers with high needs.
- 7.23 Separate accommodation for men and women allows specialist workers to tailor support accordingly, meeting the specific needs of women. In 2015/16, LBRuT and SPEAR successfully bid for funding to provide enhanced support for victims of domestic abuse in the Borough. This project aims to deliver trauma informed care interventions within a small hostel setting for single homeless women with multiple support needs related to their experience of domestic abuse. This project is funded until August 2017. During 2016/17 SPEAR worked with 81 women, including 18 new street homeless clients, and provided supported accommodation to 57 new women. In February 2017 the Council's Community Safety Team, working with SPEAR and Refuge and on behalf of both LBRuT and WBC, successfully bid for £244,011 over two years to fund additional services for victims of domestic abuse across the two boroughs.
- 7.24 Once in longer term accommodation, including the 22 training flats and homes secured in the private and social rented sector, clients are supported via a tenancy support team. In 2016/17 97% of SPEAR's supported tenancies were successfully sustained.

Additional Support

- 7.25 The pathway provides an holistic approach to enabling someone to leave the streets and address barriers to maintaining accommodation. As outlined above, rough sleepers have significant physical and mental health needs and from the outreach stage SPEAR work with clients to address these. The Homeless Health Link service, run across LBRuT, Wandsworth, Sutton, Kingston and Merton, supports clients via referrals to health service providers such as GPs, CMHT, dentists, etc. It also provides a hospital discharge service to ensure that homeless people leaving hospital with no fixed abode are able to access emergency accommodation and support. During 2016/17 the had achieved 90 GP, 48 dentist and 2 podiatry registrations and referred 100 people to mental health and substance misuse services, there were 104 joint care plans and 74 multi-agency meetings about clients cases.
- 7.26 SPEAR aim to improve employment chances of rough sleepers by addressing some of the barriers such as a lack of skills. In 2016/17 67 clients took up one or more of the training and employment activities on offer including confidence-building activities, training in IT, numeracy, literacy and life skills and volunteering placements. 50 clients benefited from SPEAR's peer mentoring programme and 5 new mentors commenced training. 18 clients

gained employment during this period. In addition, 67% of the young people who have lived in SPEAR accommodation have gained a qualification and 33% have secured employment.

Other Services for Rough Sleepers

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

7.27 SPEAR and the Council provide emergency accommodation and support for rough sleepers during periods of exceptionally cold weather in accordance with DCLG and Homeless Link guidance. SWEP is an important service element in that severe weather presents higher risks to the health of rough sleepers and can lead to death, serious injury and serious health problems. The Council and SPEAR have agreed a local SWEP protocol which is reviewed annually before SWEP commences. In 2016/17 a total of 26 individuals were accommodated under SWEP arrangements. The protocol was activated twice and there were 50 placements in total.

DCLG Rough Sleeper Grant

7.28 In November 2016 LBRuT, working in partnership with Wandsworth and Kingston Councils and SPEAR, successfully bid for DCLG funding to implement a new rough sleeper initiative. The initiative will build on the South West London Resettlement Service which engaged 259 people over 18 months and successfully secured settled accommodation for 108 clients. The partnership was successful in obtaining the maximum available grant of £200,000 per annum for the three years 2016/17 – 2018/19 which will be used to provide an outreach and resettlement service utilising a minimum of 12 bed spaces in HMOs across the three boroughs.

Vineyard Community Centre

7.29 The Vineyard Community Centre is a charity set up in 2012 to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable members of the community. Services include a morning drop-in for people experiencing crisis, a community café, a charity shop, a skills and training project and it also hosts the Richmond Food Bank. Vineyard staff signpost to SPEAR who hold an outreach session at the Centre once a week. The RCAB also has an outreach at the community centre twice a week and is able to give advice on homelessness to those who have a local connection.

7.30 In the past the Council has funded a Hospitality and Coffee Barrista training workshop with an outcome of two of the trainees finding jobs in the hospitality sector. Another skills programme which the Vineyard is currently running is 'Works of Love' which is teaching sewing skills to those who wish to sew. Craft can then be sold to earn an income.

Richmond Integrated Recovery Service

7.31 Richmond Integrated Recovery Service (RIRS) offer a number of homelessness prevention services including signposting and support with completing application forms. In addition, specialist housing advice is offered through a housing lead within the team and legal advice is sought through a solicitor. RIRS operate their own RDS for clients and offer related support to clients for whom moving into private housing is appropriate. The service also works closely with partners in the Borough to prevent homelessness including with SPEAR on clients engaging with both services, through a close working relationship with RCAB and with charity Ruils to assist clients to live independently. Long term services offered by RIRS include education, training and employment (ETE) support through an ETE lead within the team.

Emerging Findings

- The number of rough sleepers has increased from 2010/11 to 2015/16 and is higher than the sub-regional average, noting that other Boroughs in the sub-region do not have the benefit of an experienced outreach service. Alongside this increase in numbers, analysis of SPEAR's service users has highlighted the significant and complex needs of rough sleepers. There is evidence therefore of the need for continuation of service provision for rough sleepers and to ensure that this service recognises and responds to the varying psychological and physical needs of this group, including the appropriate level of focus on complex needs.
- Increasing numbers of rough sleepers require a corresponding increase in available accommodation. The Government's focus on rough sleepers and homelessness prevention has meant that additional funding streams have recently become available. DCLG funding of £400,000 awarded at the end of 2016/17 and available until 2018/19 will enable the Council, in partnership with SPEAR and Wandsworth and Kingston Councils, to provide an enhanced outreach and resettlement service including utilising a minimum of 12 bed spaces in HMOs across the three boroughs.
- The mental health needs of rough sleepers have emerged as a particular concern, with SPEAR reporting that 96% of people living in their accommodation have a mental health issue and that over half these were not receiving support from appropriate services before engaging with SPEAR. There is a need to ensure that adequate mental health provision is in place for rough sleepers and that engagement with such services is central to prevention and relief work with people at risk of rough sleeping, currently or previously sleeping rough.
- It is important that the accommodation pathway for rough sleepers is maintained, through suitable accommodation at all stages. The move-on quota for rough sleepers into social rented housing as one of the final options in the pathway is crucial to ensuring that there are not blockages in the pathway and this should be maintained and, where possible, enhanced.
- Relevant agencies, principally the Council and SPEAR, should continue to ensure that effective joint working is in place to share information and collaboratively arrive at solutions for people sleeping rough. There is a strong history of working together to source grant funding which has continued since the implementation of the SSA. In order to strengthen information sharing around known rough sleepers, a new cross-agency meeting has recently been set up by the Council. This includes the police, the Council's Housing Information and Advice Service, Community Safety and Parks teams, and SPEAR.
- Focus should continue to be on maintaining a pathway to independent living with an outcome based model which diverts rough sleepers away from the street lifestyle and into sustainable tenancies.

8. Prevention Services

Council Services

Housing Information and Advice

- 8.1 The Housing Information and Advice Team offers advice, undertakes prevention work and provides Part VII casework services to residents submitting homeless applications to the

Council. The team aim to resolve any issue which could potentially cause homelessness before a case progresses to a Part VII homelessness application.

- 8.2 The prevention work includes mediating between those seeking advice and their parents, friends and family to resolve any disputes which may be jeopardising housing arrangements. This includes cases where the lead applicant is 16 or 17 years old. If a young person has been assessed by AfC and the Information and Advice Team have been unsuccessful in reconciling a family, a dedicated Young Persons Housing Officer will source appropriate supported accommodation for the applicant.
- 8.3 When assisting households who are threatened with homelessness as a result of rent arrears, the team will request that, where an HB claim is in place, this is paid direct to the landlord. This is only permitted under certain circumstances for claimants of the housing element of UC. In addition, the team offer advice to any resident experiencing financial hardship and support them to seek alternative, more affordable accommodation or will signpost to relevant voluntary sector organisations.
- 8.4 The team also advise residents who are affected by evictions from the PRS, but are limited in their powers to resolve such cases. This is because PRS tenants with an AST are required to vacate a property providing the landlord has completed the correct legal process to gain possession. In the vast majority of cases, the correct process is entered into; the team deal with approximately only four illegal eviction cases per year and, in such cases, will attempt to reinstate the tenancy and, subsequently, contact a solicitor if the landlord is uncooperative.
- 8.5 Women suffering domestic violence and abuse have access to the sanctuary scheme. There is a system in place whereby the team will refer cases to a Refuge outreach worker who arranges for the work to be done by a contractor, before the team receives an invoice for the work. The Information and Advice Team deal with approximately five such cases per month.
- 8.6 If homelessness cannot be prevented, households will be housed in TA while their homeless application is being assessed and, subsequent to them being accepted as being owed the full duty, while long-term accommodation is being sought. Each officer in the team manages approximately 20 live cases at a time and at the end of 2016/17, there were 267 households in TA. More information on TA can be found in the *Accommodation Services* chapter.

Resettlement Team

- 8.7 The Resettlement Team support vulnerable households and/or those who have not previously held a tenancy to manage in their TA, assist the transition period to settled accommodation, and ensure that they are able to fully maintain any settled offer of accommodation before the support is withdrawn. This tenancy sustainment service involves one-to-one work with clients helping them to organise benefit claims, set up utilities, prepare budgeting plans, organising removals and packing, and purchasing or sourcing furniture from charities. The team may also signpost to additional services as necessary. The aim of the team is to empower clients in order that they possess the confidence, independence and practical skills to successfully sustain their tenancy for the long term. In addition, for applicants in TA who do not require the full resettlement service package but who may benefit from some financial assistance the team operate a drop in service every Wednesday afternoon, Moving Matters, to assist with completing applications to charities for furniture funding and other advice around moving into settled accommodation.
- 8.8 Referrals to the Resettlement service usually come from the Housing Information and Advice Team, however the Allocations Team and on occasion RPs may also refer clients. The four Resettlement Officers each manage a case load of approximately 30 active cases which are

closed only when the officers believe that their client is capable of maintaining their tenancy; this can take up to two years in some instances. Table 8 shows the numbers of clients referred to the Team since 2012 and the number of people attending Moving Matters.

Year	No. Referrals Received	Moving Matters Attendees
2012	135	146
2013	95	132
2014	91	140
2015	103	136
2016	89	137
2017	102	90

Table 8, Source: Council's own data

The team has a strong track record of tenancy sustainment amongst clients; with the exception of those who have died or gone to prison. 411 out of 412 clients, who received support from the Resettlement Service between 2012–2017, maintained their tenancy 12 months later (a 99.8% success rate). The team provides a cost saving to the Council by preventing repeat instances of homelessness, for example as a result of rent arrears which may have developed in the absence of support.

- 8.9 The success of the team is attributed partly to the strong links with charities within LBRuT; officers report that because of their long standing relationship with local charities they willingly accept referrals and requests for assistance from the team. In addition, the team source funds from local charities in order to purchase furniture and essential household items for clients. The charities who provide financial grants are the Richmond Parish Lands Charity, Barnes Workhouse Fund and Barnes Relief in Need. They also receive furniture and white goods from Hampton Fuel Allotment charity. Table 9 sets out the amounts sourced in cash grants since 2012/13.

Year	Cash Grants Obtained
2012/13	£56,967.02
2013/14	£32,288.89
2014/15	£32,927.96
2015/16	£45,035.78
2016/17 as at Feb 2017	£29,339.14

Table 9, Source: Council's own data

- 8.10 The decreasing value of awards since 2012/13 is attributed to the decreasing number of referrals to the service over this period; in 2012 the team received 135 referrals however in 2013 this dropped to 95 and has remained fairly static at this level since. It may also be the case that the team taking on responsibility for administering the Local Assistance Scheme (as detailed below) has also been a factor, as assistance will be sought via this route in the first instance.
- 8.11 Since 2014 the Local Assistance Scheme has been managed by the Resettlement Team (previously known as the Community Care Grant, managed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)). The team manage an annual grant budget of £140,000 and assess grant applications from anyone in the Borough in receipt of benefits who requires financial assistance with items such as white goods and furniture or fuel grants of up to £85 per

household. In 2016/17 the team accepted 300 applications for support and awarded £125,572.58 in grants. The budget is not ring-fenced; where this is unspent the Council should consider how best to utilise the remaining grant to aid work around homelessness prevention and relief. It may be prudent to conduct a review of applications to ascertain how many are not successful and whether there is scope to lessen restrictions or how best the budget should be utilised, in view of additional duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act.

8.12 Following the SSA (discussed in detail in the Resources chapter), the resettlement team will remain in the LBRuT offices and continue to serve LBRuT residents only. An additional officer has been recruited to the team who specialises in providing support and signposting services for single homeless applicants who do not qualify as being in priority need but who lead chaotic lifestyles led by rough sleeping, mental health issues, and substance misuse. This officer's services will expand across both Wandsworth and Richmond boroughs and will aid in the prevention of hardship to those most vulnerable single homeless people.

8.13 Below are two case studies that demonstrate the positive impact of the service on recent homeless applicants.

Case Study 1:

A 21 year old female who led a chaotic lifestyle experienced difficulties with her benefit claim due to her inconsistent approach to employment and she was at risk of falling into rent arrears. The Resettlement Officer delayed activating her offer of settled accommodation as she was satisfied that the client was not yet ready to manage a tenancy. Over a period of eight months the officer worked closely with the client in TA and taught her to understand the impact of her actions. Gradually the client began to make the right decisions to stabilise her benefit claim and prevent rent arrears. She has since been offered accommodation and is managing her tenancy very well.

Case Study 2:

A Polish female was offered settled accommodation after she fled domestic abuse from her ex-partner. The abuse included her having been financially exploited, and she had over £50,000 worth of credit card debt. English is not her first language and her confidence was extremely low. The Resettlement Team supported her to apply for Employment and Support Allowance so she had her own income, assisted in arranging her new home with white goods and furniture, and also contacted her creditors to arrange a manageable repayment plan. This client is now doing very well.

Achieving for Children

8.14 The Council and AfC have developed a joint working protocol around how they work on youth homelessness. It has the following aims:

- To ensure that 16/17 year olds are best supported to remain living in their family home where possible unless this places them at risk of significant harm;
- Providing family mediation and interventions to prevent relationship breakdown;
- Providing clear process to age appropriate accommodation and support for young people age 16/17 who are at risk of homelessness;
- Providing an unbiased single access point for young people where they can get independent advice and support;
- Facilitating a collective multi-agency responsibility to the southwark judgement to prevent youth homelessness whilst finding shared solutions to accommodate the target group and meet their needs.

- 8.15 Family Support Service is available to those families with young people that have additional needs. This is a holistic service, supporting families of children age 0-18, using EHA to assess children/families' needs, in order to develop appropriate care plans/interventions to meet the identified needs. As the main trigger for youth homelessness is relationship breakdown (usually with parents or step-parents or at times long-term conflict within the home involving violence), early identification of such risks is critical to provide early help and prevent homelessness. There have been 57 families in Quarter 4 2016/17 subject to a new EHA alongside 151 ongoing EHAs.
- 8.16 The Strengthening Families (SF) programme offers intensive support to families with additional needs who present high costs to the public purse in line with the national Troubled Families programme criteria. Families can access support from Family Coaches, Employment/Benefits Advisors, Domestic Violence support alongside clear pathways to services for adults with mental health and substance misuse needs. SF is currently in year two of a five year programme and has positively engaged with over 295 families.
- 8.17 AfC Community Learning provision offers a wide range of lifelong learning courses and pathways into adult education and bursaries for courses to support adults and families to learn and achieve positive economic outcomes, for instance by gaining employment. Similarly, the Youth Service provides support to young people engaging with risky behaviour that may impact on positive outcomes such as staying health and engaged in employment, education or training. The intrinsic link between unemployment and housing problems means that this service represents an effective upstream prevention tool and should be maintained and where possible strengthened, particularly in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act's emphasis on preventative services.

Other Council Services

Domestic Violence

- 8.18 The Community Safety Team signpost victims of domestic abuse to services and liaise with relevant service providers through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), Community Risk MARAC or Integrated Offender Management (IOM) panels. On occasion immediate advice is given to service users around housing options if they call directly to the Community Safety Team or if they present at the Civic Centre. Referrals are also offered to the commissioned Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service, Refuge, to offer further advice around housing. There are gaps for very complex cases in current services which recently awarded DCLG funding can be used to address.

Mental Health

- 8.19 The Council is committed to effective joint working in order to ensure that people with mental health problems have access to adequate support, including around housing. The LBRuT Mental Health and Housing Joint Working Protocol is an operational level agreement for joint working and information sharing between housing and mental health professionals in the Borough. It aims to establish clear mechanisms for relevant professionals to share information appropriately when necessary while safeguarding the rights of service users to privacy and confidentiality. Similarly, the LBRuT Homelessness Prevention and Hospital Discharge (Mental Health) Protocol is intended to improve joint working between housing and mental health services around the discharge process from inpatient wards, with a particular focus on preventing homelessness and minimising delayed discharge. Both protocols will be reviewed by the end of 2017/18 following the separation of mental health and social care services

provided by the Council and South West London and St Georges NHS Mental Health Trust (SWLStG).

- 8.20 The adult mental health social work team works with service users to sustain tenancies by providing a range of support. This includes information and advice about homelessness, referrals to partner agencies such as SPEAR for support and advice where necessary, and providing assessment and support plans to work collaboratively with local housing providers to address behaviours that put tenancies at risk. In order to avoid eviction financial support may be provided, for example funding for deep cleans where a service user is considered by their landlord to be in breach of their tenancy conditions due to the condition of the property, or support to access DHP in instances where a service user is due to be in hospital for an unknown length of time.

Learning Disabilities

- 8.21 The Council and the Richmond CCG developed a framework for prevention⁴⁹ which set out plans to meet health needs of LBRuT residents and address the housing options available to people with learning disabilities. In 2014, the JSNA identified 412 adults in the Borough with a learning disability who were receiving council services, with 169 living in care homes and 243 receiving community services⁵⁰. The framework highlights the importance of provision of supported housing for those with learning disabilities and notes that three new supported living homes were recently developed in the Borough as a result of successful joint working between Adult Social Care, Housing Development, RPs and local residents. The adequate provision of supported accommodation means that people with learning disabilities can be rehoused in more appropriate accommodation and do not pass through the statutory homelessness route.

Rent Deposit Scheme

- 8.22 The RDS is a prevention tool which aims to help homeless applicants move into the PRS more easily by offering a guaranteed deposit to landlords against any disrepair. To qualify to access the RDS, households must have a local connection and be homeless or threatened with homelessness, over 18, in priority need, able to live independently and able to demonstrate that their rent will be affordable.

Year	Number of RDS Completions
2012/13	65
2013/14	116
2014/15	86
2015/16	70
2016/17	76

Table 10, Source: Council's own data

- 8.23 The scheme represents a key prevention tool which has the potential to divert between 65 and 100 households each year from statutory services. The cost of a homeless acceptance has been found to be in the region of £214,000 meaning that preventing this by providing a deposit of around £9,000 (assuming six weeks' rent in a £1,500 property) presents a significant cost saving to the Council.

⁴⁹ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/framework_for_prevention_2015-18.pdf

⁵⁰ JSNA (2014) *Disability - Health Needs Assessment*. Available from: <http://www.datarich.info/jsna/groups-and-communities/equalities/disability>

8.24 The number of RDS completions has decreased since 2013/14, due in part to increasing market rent levels and LHA caps which make renting properties via the Council less financially appealing for private landlords. The peak in the number of RDS completions in 2013/14 coincided with the increase in the number of PRSOs, which has since been used less frequently. An additional factor that may impact landlords' interest in the scheme is the lack of advertisement. Other than a small advertisement on the Council's website, awareness of the scheme is reliant on word of mouth marketing between landlords and agents. This may be an area to focus on.

Discretionary Housing Payments

8.25 Revenue and Benefits can award DHP to households receiving HB or the housing element of UC who can demonstrate that they will experience or are experiencing hardship without the additional help provided by the payments. DHP cannot be awarded to help pay for charges separate from rent, such as water rates and service charges. In 2016/17, the Council's DHP spend was £289,000 of an allocated budget of £310,000, with the unspent proportion of the budget being sent back to the Government. As table 11 shows, DHP has been underspent for the previous four years; this is concerning as it indicates the Council is not fully utilising available resources in order to prevent homelessness. A key action for the Council to consider is how best to utilise its DHP allocation and, for example, whether this could be used to fund schemes such as the RDS detailed above. In addition, the Council should improve residents' awareness of the availability of DHP through targeted publicity and should aim to develop a more proactive way of working to ensure that use of this tool is maximised.

Year	DHP Expenditure	DHP Allocation
2013/14	£254,000	£406,000
2014/15	£279,000	£346,000
2015/16	£187,000	£241,000
2016/17	£289,000	£310,000

Table 11, Source: Council's own data

Statutory & Voluntary Sector Partners

Job Centre Plus (JCP)

8.26 Being unemployed is often a barrier to securing and maintaining settled accommodation. JCP Advisors refer clients for additional support designed to make them work ready including CV workshops, ESOL lessons, etc. Individuals who are without accommodation and leaving prison will be mandated to the Work Programme at day one or if they make a Jobseeker's Allowance claim within 13 weeks of their release date. As of September 2016, there were 86 people without accommodation recorded on the JCP's system in LBRuT; strong links between the JCP and partners including the Council are needed to ensure that appropriate referral routes are in place for these clients. The Homelessness Reduction Act will require local partners to make referrals to the LA if they become aware that a client of theirs is at risk of homelessness and this renewed focus on partnership working is an opportunity to strengthen existing links and ensure that an holistic approach is taken to homelessness prevention which draws on all relevant agencies' expertise and resources.

Richmond Citizens Advice Bureau

8.27 The Council has a contract with RCAB to provide advice on homelessness, housing, benefits and debt. These services can be accessed via telephone, email, one-to-one appointments and outreach services in Ham, Sheen and Twickenham. RCAB provided services to 5,450 residents

in 2016/17, addressing issues such as debts, rent arrears and employment although the single biggest concern was welfare benefits which accounted for 93% of clients' visits. With the continuing rollout of UC and its emphasis on being a digital service, RCAB anticipate an increase in the number of claimants requiring support. Table 12 shows that, against targets, the service has the capacity to respond to demand. New duties brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act and their implications should be considered when the RCAB contract is due for renewal. A stronger focus on services for all homeless people, including personalised plans, and the need to work closely with local partners to satisfy new duties may necessitate the review of LBRuT-funded targets.

Performance Measure	LBRuT-funded Targets (2016/17)		
	Target	Actual	%
Individual clients seen by the service	5700	5450	96%
Clients supported with welfare benefits issues	5700	5077	89%
Client debt issues addressed*	3420	2524	74%
Client rent arrears issues addressed	280	276	99%
Client employment issues addressed	1525	1206	79%

*Debt issues have a tendency to be under reported due to anomalies with the Customer Relationship Management system, as there is limited space to add issues at the first point of contact

Table 12, Source: RCAB

Refuge

8.28 Refuge National Domestic Violence Helpline offers support over the telephone to any individual needing advice and information about domestic abuse. Refuge provide casework with clients and have specially trained staff who can give appropriate advice around housing options. They also support clients to maximise income through employment or benefits and support clients with HB applications. If a woman is able and in a position to work Refuge encourage clients to attend training courses to get them work ready. They also support women into education and training through ESOL or further education courses. Support is available for up to three months from leaving the refuge service or for a year via the floating support service. During this time income maximisation work and support in applying for benefits and grants continues. In 2016/17 Refuge supported 507 clients in the Borough across a range of platforms: 29 clients were housed in refuges, 20 clients were provided with floating support, 155 clients were assisted with outreach work and 303 clients were supported by the IDVA.

Richmond Advice and Information on Disability

8.29 The Council commissions RAID to provide a specialist community advice service. RAID supports adults with any disability including mental health, learning, physical and sensory disabilities. It provides advice to 3,000 clients per year with approximately 20 of these being homeless and a further 200 at risk of homelessness. RAID offer advice and information on a number of topics including benefits, debt management, landlord issues, budgeting, grant applications, employment support and digital inclusion. Like RCAB, RAID anticipate an increase

in the number of claimants requiring support when UC is fully rolled out due to the additional emphasis on a digital service.

The Richmond Wellbeing Service (RWS)

8.30 The RWS offers treatment for common mental health disorders, as well as support for GPs as part of their Primary Care Liaison service. Good mental health contributes to the prevention of homelessness, and RWS also works with employment advisor services to support individuals practically as well as therapeutically. Along with the SWLStG, RWS offers referrals to Twining Enterprise, a charity focused on supporting people with mental health problems to gain employment. This includes the Richmond Works project which offers one-to-one meetings with a Twining’s Advisor, assistance with preparing a CV and with searching for jobs, accessing welfare benefits and advice on disclosing mental health problems to employers.

Barnes Workhouse Fund

8.31 The Barnes Workhouse Fund is a local grant-making trust which works with local organisations and individual applicants to support people with health problems and those in poverty. The Fund also operates a sheltered housing scheme in Barnes which provides accommodation for approximately 40 residents. In 2015, The Barnes Workhouse Fund spent £19,600 on poverty relief grants which were given to individuals and £129,500 on grants to organisations such as SPEAR, RCAB and RAID, with these three organisations accounting for £50,000 of grant spending.

Richmond Parish Lands Charity

8.32 Richmond Parish Lands Charity (RPLC) distribute revenue income through grants to organisations, winter fuel payments to pensioners on benefits and grants to those who are considered to be in severe need. RPLC also acts as a private landlord and provides housing at a subsidised rate to residents of the Borough who do not own a property and who have little chance of moving into the PRS. RPLC purchased a four-bedroom property for use by SPEAR to support the homeless in LBRuT, a second property is also leased to SPEAR who also receive financial support with rent payments. RPLC provide 83 tenanted units to support local families in need at significant reductions compared to the market.

SPEAR

8.33 As well as offering specialist services to rough sleepers, SPEAR provide homelessness prevention services to anyone experiencing a housing problem and at risk of homelessness. This includes the telephone advice line, which receives more than 2000 calls per year.

Case Study 3 – How our voluntary sector partners support vulnerable residents

X has a long term enduring mental health with a diagnosis of bi-polar, emotional instability and has suffered from episodes of suicidal ideation which have resulted in being sectioned under the Mental Health Act on several occasions. X had ECT treatment which resulted in short term memory loss and struggles to manage budgeting. X also suffers from extensive physical problems.

X has a long history of struggles with budgeting and money management exacerbated by physical health and having sought comfort through online shopping. X’s relationship broke down in 2014 and resulted in homelessness. After an extended stay in hospital, X was housed by SPEAR in early 2015 RAID began working with X in July 2015.

X received daily messages and letters from three separate bailiffs and became increasingly distressed. RAID staff made repeated efforts to make contact and carried out several home visits. X is now firmly engaged with the service and keeps in regular contact attending the office rather than needing home visits.

RAID staff unpicked X's debts, where several bailiffs were in fact collecting the same debts, and worked closely with X's care-coordinator from the Community Mental Health Team and GP in obtaining medical letters on how X's health impacted her cognitive behaviours.

X is no longer in receipt of any further bailiff's demands. Five debts amounting to £4096 have now been written off and two more are being negotiated. X was supported to complete a claim for Employment and Support Allowance and was placed straight into the specialist support group that has been set up by JCP to support people with complex needs. X is now in receipt of full benefits and is managing finances on a monthly basis, meeting all daily living expenses and has not needed to apply for any new credit since.

Registered Providers' Services

Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP)

8.34 RHP assist tenants who are struggling to pay their rent by providing housing advice, a tenancy sustainment service and by signposting to other support agencies. They also offer financial inclusion activities such as support with grant and benefit applications and digital inclusion activity through supporting online benefit claims.

Paragon

8.35 Immediate prevention services offered include debt and money advice through Advice Richmond and Money Advice Plus and access to the Hardship Fund which offers maximum payments of £150. Tenancy Solutions Coordinators work with vulnerable tenants on a one-to-one basis, providing support and signposting to other agencies to assist tenants to sustain their tenancies. Tenants may also be supported to apply for DHP and to resolve issues around welfare benefits sanctions. Long-term preventative work includes employment support via ETHOS (Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership) and the Back to Work fund which provides financial support for employment related costs. Paragon also runs an in-house digital inclusion initiative, the Digital Champions project.

Thames Valley

8.36 Thames Valley's frontline staff provide advice on welfare reform and tenancy sustainment with additional services also available including resettlement support, employment training and the supply of white goods and beds to qualifying low income households. Thames Valley also consider moving tenants with arrears if a household has been affected by welfare reform and is likely to be unable to sustain their tenancy. Households at the greatest risk of eviction can be referred to Thames Valley's more comprehensive tenancy support service providing they satisfy the qualifying criteria.

Emerging Findings

- The Council should ensure that it is making full use of available resources in order to provide the most effective prevention service possible. Underspend of DHP should be addressed and measures put in place to ensure that this fund is being utilised as fully as possible by those households for whom it provides a real prevention tool.
- Similarly, the Local Assistance Scheme budget underspend should also be addressed and

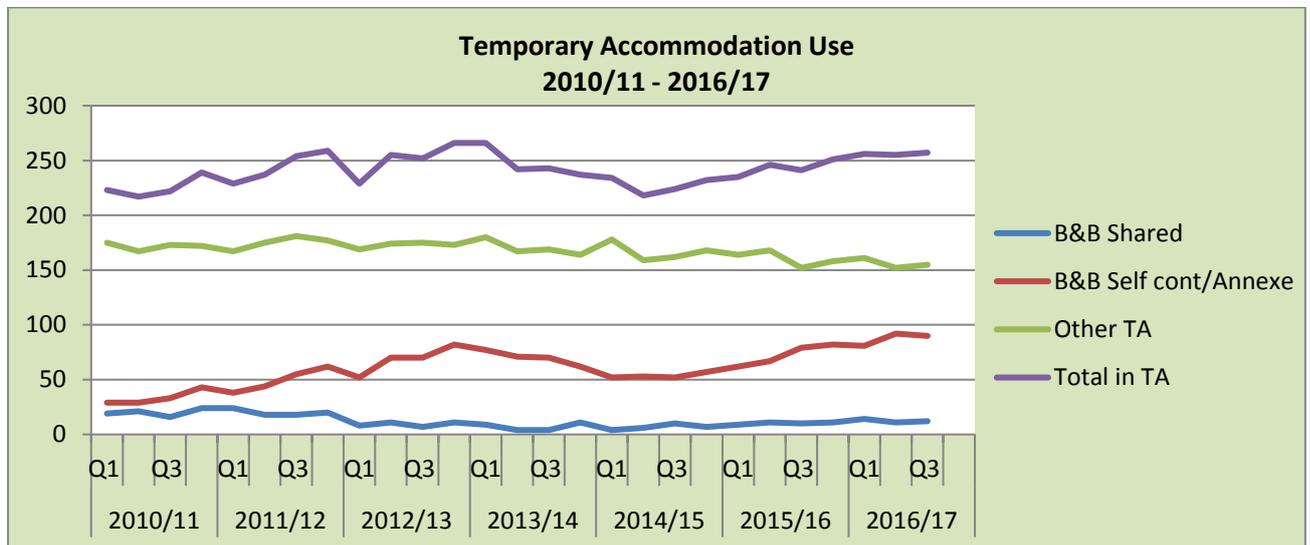
consideration given to how best to either maximise spending under this scheme or to use the grant in other related areas to assist with homelessness prevention and relief work, particularly in light of new duties under the Homelessness Reduction Act. It is not yet clear how additional grant from the Government will be allocated to fund these new additional duties and the Council will need to ensure that it makes best use of existing funds to meet current and future demand. As part of this the Council should consider what related schemes and services would benefit from additional funding, should DHP and/or Local Assistance grant be available, for instance the RDS.

- The Borough has a strong voluntary sector and there are strong links established between partners. These need to be maintained, particularly in light of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the new duties this places on LAs in regards to cooperation with local partners and effective upstream prevention. The Homelessness Forum, a bi-annual meeting of the Council and its partners, is key to sustaining these strong relationships and will provide opportunity to prepare collaboratively for the Act and other arising issues.

9. Accommodation Services

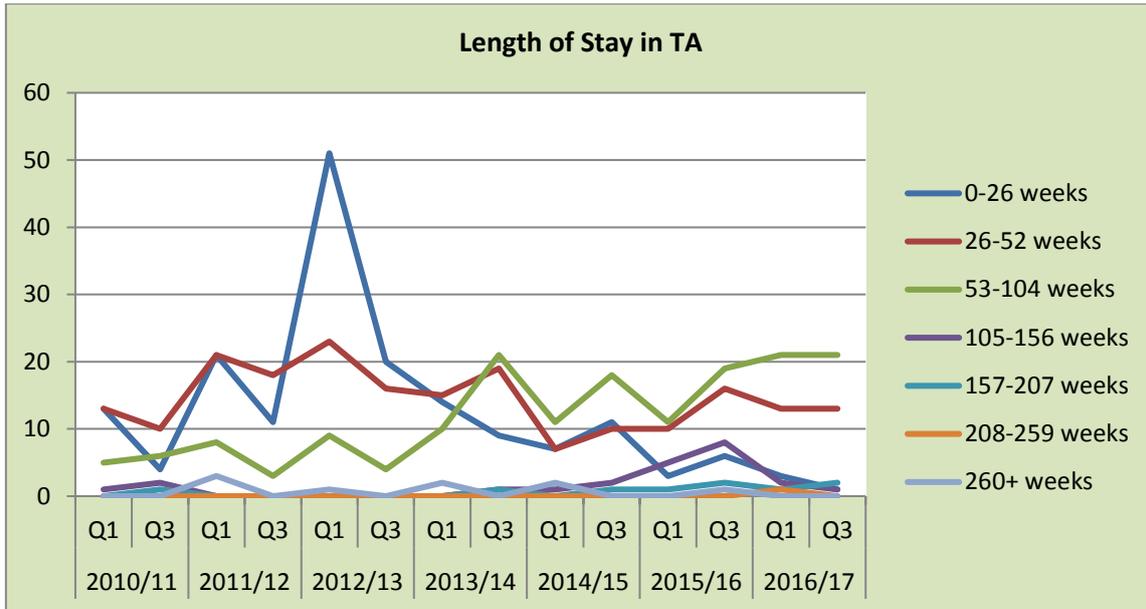
Temporary Accommodation

- 9.1 Councils are required to secure emergency TA for homeless households while their case is being assessed where there is a reason to believe that they may be eligible, homeless and in priority need. TA is also provided for homeless households who are owed the duty to be rehoused under Part VII Housing Act 1996. TA may be in the form of B&B or hostel accommodation. Accepted households may also be provided with short term leased properties (STLs).
- 9.2 Graph 16 below shows that, since 2010/11 use of TA in LBRuT has remained fairly static, rising slightly to stand at 257 households accommodated in TA at the end of Q3 2016/17 compared to 222 in Q3 2010/11. This is to be expected, considering the trend that homelessness decisions and acceptances has followed over this period.



Graph 16, Source: Council’s own data

- 9.3 As graph 17 shows, most homeless households are in TA for 53 – 104 weeks (between one and two years) and the number staying in TA for less than six months (26 weeks) has decreased since 2010/11. That said it is positive to note that the majority of households’ stay is no longer than 104 weeks which is indicative of adequate move-on provision, which for most will be social rented accommodation (as has already been noted, turnover is relatively high in local RP stock). It is important to maintain a strong performance due to the high cost of facilitating TA for homeless households as well as the negative impacts this relatively unsettled accommodation may have on certain households.



Graph 17, Source: Council’s own data

Hostels

9.4 The Council operates two hostels within the Borough. Queens Road hostel is based in Richmond and has 32 rooms with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities; Uxbridge hostel is based in Hampton and has 18 rooms with private kitchenettes and shared bathroom facilities. Both hostels have a variety of sized rooms to cater for both single and family households. Each hostel previously had on-site managers and weekend wardens to monitor applicant attendance and to deal with the daily management such as complaints, repairs, cleaning and turning around rooms within 24 hours of an applicant vacating. However since the implementation of the SSA, there is no longer a full time on-site resource. Instead, cleaning services are contracted and CCTV and signing-in books monitor use of the provision. The Council is working with local ward Councillors to address any concerns over reduced cover.

Short Term Lease

9.5 The Council manages 108 STLs both in and out of Borough. Since 2014 Pan London rates have set the nightly charge. This has proven to be a useful negotiating tool and prevents agents or landlords from seeking competitive prices from other boroughs or overcharging for accommodation.

Bed and Breakfast

9.6 Although the majority of TA overall is located within Borough, most available B&B accommodation is in the neighbouring Borough of Hounslow (see table 13 below). This is only used on a requirement basis when hostel or STL accommodation is unavailable. As at 31st December 2017 there were no families with dependent children or pregnant women who had been in B&B for longer than six weeks.

Out of Borough Placements

9.7 The majority of TA provided is within the LBRuT and out of borough placements are located mainly in neighbouring boroughs as shown by table 13 below. As of 31st December 2017 of all of those placed in temporary accommodation 81% were placed in the Borough, 15.5% in neighbouring boroughs and only 3.5% were not in the Borough or neighbouring

boroughs. This has the effect of preserving applicants' existing social, education and employment links and support networks which has been an important driver when considering TA policy. The Council is also mindful of the case law resulting from the *Nzolameso v City of Westminster* judgment which had the effect of making out of borough placements more challenging as LAs are required to demonstrate that they have searched for accommodation as near to the applicant's home borough as possible. When considering out of borough placements, the LBRuT accepted the best practice guidelines on determining the suitability of offers contained in LB Wandsworth's committee paper⁵¹. This sets out circumstances where households should be prioritised for in-borough accommodation such as when children are at certain educational levels and where child protection proceedings are being undertaken. Out of borough PRSO offers are not made unless the applicant voluntarily wishes to move out of the area.

- 9.7 It must be noted however that the Council, in striving to house people as locally to the Borough as possible, has accrued a large overspend in TA budget as detailed in *Resources*. Going forward, consideration must be given to whether it is feasible to continue this practice or whether the Council needs to look further afield to provide affordable, sustainable TA while maintaining local provision where particular vulnerabilities, education stages, etc. necessitate its use.

Location	B&B shared	B&B self contained	Hostel	PSL & Registered Provider	Total
Hillingdon	0	3	0	0	3
Hounslow	8	70	0	7	85
Kingston	0	1	0	0	1
Richmond	4	15	45	103	167
Slough	1	1	0	0	2
Spelthorne	0	0	0	1	1
Total	13	90	45	111	259

Note: this excludes Refuge placements
Table 13, Source: Council's own data

Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups

Domestic Abuse Victims

- 9.8 The Council commissions Refuge to operate two specialist refuges in the Borough. These are seven and eight bed units offering person-centred support and stays of up to two years. Additionally floating support services are also provided to an additional 14 units, with support provided for up to one year. The refuge system works on the basis that LAs fund refuges within their LA but clients often come from out of borough. This is reciprocated across the country so that those fleeing domestic abuse in LBRuT could access refuges in other LA areas.

Care Leavers

- 9.9 There is a well-established accommodation pathway for care leavers. This includes a six bed 24 hour staffed semi-independent unit, an outreach programme for 10 young people and an emergency bed space. Other bed spaces are purchased from other London boroughs if required. The Council's housing register incorporates a quota for care leavers so that they are

⁵¹ <http://wbcvmmod01/documents/s37368/Appendix%206.pdf>

able to access social rented housing. In addition, there is an allocations quota for young adults moving from residential placements into independent living to gain access to supported social rented housing. Where additional properties are required single person flats in the PRS are let.

- 9.10 An accommodation review undertaken in 2013 found that progressively higher needs of young care leavers has meant that the take up of move-on accommodation is taking longer to achieve, which is also not helped by the lack of supply of RP homes. The report recommended more 24 hour staffed provision for this client group. In November 2016 Cabinet agreed to the Council allocating resources and land to develop 24 hour staffed Children's Home within the Borough.
- 9.11 A high proportion of young people having left care were in suitable accommodation in LBRuT. As at 31st March 2015, of the 15 young people aged 19 who had previously been in care in LBRuT, 100% were living in suitable accommodation. This is higher than the London and England averages of 83% and 84% respectively.

Ex-Offenders

- 9.12 The Council commissions Home Group (Stonham) to manage and provide housing and related support for ex-offenders with the aim of enabling residents to be independent and avoid re-offending. This is in the form of 19 units of accommodation across two hostels providing short-term (up to two years) tenancies for male ex-offenders. Referrals are made through the prison and probation service. There is a Council quota, currently of three units, for move on accommodation from these flats.
- 9.13 The Council also commissions Look Ahead to manage six flats for ex-offenders. They provide floating support to single people aged between 18 and 65 years for 18 to 24 months in temporary supported housing. Ex-offenders access other accommodation pathways such as supported housing for mental health or through the SPEAR rough sleeper pathway. 40% of SPEAR clients have a history of offending, the majority of whom also have a mental health support need; this is discussed in detail in *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping*.

People with Mental Health Problems

- 9.14 The Council commissions a number of mental health supported housing schemes and services. This includes 24 units of 24-hour support services for high level needs, 18 units of medium supported accommodation (office hours' support), 37 units of low level support and 20 units of floating support to people in their own homes. All but 15 of the high needs units are provided by the in-house managed Kingston Lane site and a commissioned contract with Metropolitan, across various sites.
- 9.15 Plans are underway to reconfigure the existing supported housing arrangements into one Mental Health Accommodation Pathway (MHAP). It is proposed that, as part of the reconfiguration, the total capacity within the MHAP be increased from 84 to 111 units in order to match the current and projected needs of people with mental health issues. As at September 2016 there were 90 people receiving mental health support or care in high cost or out of borough placements; increasing capacity in LBRuT will enable more people to access supported housing within their community and reduce admissions to acute, non-acute and health-based services. The increase in capacity would be in two phases. Phase 1, due to begin in summer 2017, will increase capacity to 100, before increasing to 111 in Phase 2 which is estimated to begin in February 2018. The Council's Allocation Scheme includes provision for move-ons from supported accommodation; the numbers provided each year for this will vary depending on availability of accommodation.

Affordable Housing Development

- 9.16 The development of affordable housing can contribute to greater housing options for homeless households by increasing the number and diversity of accommodation in an area and thus relieving overall pressures on certain tenures. Whilst development is not a solution to housing need it is part of a multifaceted approach which includes increasing turnover in social stock, improving access to the PRS and where appropriate encouraging access to home ownership (particularly shared ownership).
- 9.17 As a prosperous Borough with high property prices, low income and vulnerable households are often unable to afford full market rent or to purchase accommodation. The affordable housing policies were therefore revised ahead of the current Local Plan policy review, to maintain a requirement of 50% affordable housing which is to be broken down on a 40:10 split, this translates to an 80:20 rent (affordable (including the London Affordable Rent): intermediate (including shared ownership and intermediate rent) development in the Borough, in contrast to the norm of 60:40 in Greater London. This was supported by recommendations in the LBRuT's SHMA⁵².
- 9.18 Housing development in the Borough faces a number of challenges. LBRuT is a unique borough with approximately 55% of the Borough being designated Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt, and over half designated as Conservation Areas. In total, more than two thirds of the Borough is protected by either Open Land or Conservation designations. Planning policies are therefore bound by these constraints which seek to retain character. In addition, land availability for residential development is further constrained by high existing use values, making it difficult for RPs to compete with private developers.
- 9.19 In addition the Borough has to respond to other external factors that influence delivery of affordable housing. One significant factor is the ongoing relaxation of permitted development restrictions to allow conversion of office and retail floor space to residential. The Council's Local Plan seeks to maximise delivery of affordable housing in schemes involving loss of employment floor space. Permitted development has had a notable local impact accounting for over 52,700 sqm loss of office floorspace over the four years between 2013/14 to 2016/17. Of the net gain in housing completions those completed under permitted development rights accounted for 69% in 2014/15, 58% in 2015/16 and 34% in 2016/17, where there is no requirement for affordable housing to be provided under these arrangements.
- 9.20 Primarily due to viability considerations, the achievement of the planning policy requirement of 50% affordable housing is challenging. In the four years to 2016/17 the maximum achieved through Section 106 agreements was 12% in 2013/14.

Funding for Affordable Housing

- 9.21 The Council supports affordable housing development through the HCP fund. This funding is financed by a variety of avenues including Section 106 contributions. New housing developments need to provide a percentage of affordable housing and where this is not possible onsite, the planning process allows for a payment to be made in lieu of provision. These sums are then used to grant fund the provision of affordable homes elsewhere in the Borough. Where appropriate, onsite provision is negotiated and prioritised. However as a result the fund does not provide a regular and predictable source of grant. To ensure delivery has consistent funds the HCP therefore is also financed through the New Homes Bonus and

⁵² http://www.richmond.gov.uk/housing_market_assessment_draft_report_june_2016.pdf

prudential borrowing. Funding from the HCP for developments which completed in 2015/16 and 2016/17 totalled £791,000 and £500,000 respectively⁵³.

Affordable Housing Development 2010 - 2017

- 9.22 Since 2010 LBRuT has provided £11.65 million in grant funding to RPs from the HCP to support the delivery of affordable homes for rent on schemes which would not otherwise have been viable.
- 9.23 130 rented homes were provided through supporting RPs to use their own assets and 45 rented homes were achieved through disposal of Council owned land to RPs some also provided with HCP funding. 273 affordable housing homes were secured through S106 agreements with private developers with HCP providing gap funding for 163 of these to ensure the scheme was financially viable. A further 82 were achieved through the purchase and repair on the open market of homes for affordable rent. Overall, of all the affordable rented homes delivered in this period (510) 53% required funding from the HCP.
- 9.24 The HCP has also been utilised to extend existing homes, creating additional bedrooms to meet demand for family-sized accommodation and ease overcrowding in social rented stock. Between 2012 and 2014 the Council approved the use of £750,000 from the HCP which enabled RHP and Places for People to deliver 19 extensions, creating 21 additional bedrooms in total.
- 9.25 RHP identified opportunities for a further programme of 20 more extensions and in January 2015 the Council's Cabinet agreed further funding of £540,000 to support this (£25,000 for a single room extension, £35,000 for a two room extension). This was supplemented with £360,000 grant funding from the Mayor of London's Building the Pipeline Programme. RHP has contributed £71,125 on average to the overall cost of each extension. This additional programme has now been completed. The knock-on effect of this was to free-up 10 places on RHP's transfer queue as well as enabling overcrowded families to remain in their homes, maintain existing support networks including continuity of children's schooling. In October 2017, there were 300 overcrowded families on RHP's transfer queue indicating a continuing need for this programme. Thus in October 2016, the Council agreed to support a continued RHP programme of extensions and loft conversions, allocating £250,000. Grant funding was increased to £40,000 for a one bedroom extension and £50,000 for two bedrooms. It was also agreed that works could be undertaken to suitable empty properties that could subsequently be let to overcrowded households.

Affordable Housing Development 2016-2021

- 9.26 The Council undertakes a five year capital programme and as at October 2016, a total budget of £19.9million has been provided for 2016-2021 to enable further opportunities for delivery, funded by the HCP. Economic and market cycles will always influence development delivery. However there are plans to use this funding to deliver 109 homes (74 affordable rent and 35 shared ownership) expected to complete in 2017/18. There is planning permission for a further 120 affordable homes that could be implemented in 2018/19 or later and there is an estimated pipeline of a further 258 affordable homes from 2018 which includes schemes involving disposal of Council land (61 homes) subject to feasibility and funding approval.
- 9.27 Support will continue for providers to convert their current assets, such as disused garages into affordable housing. Land disposal will also remain an important aspect of increasing the

⁵³ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/completed_housing_developments.htm

supply of affordable housing in the Borough. Officers are continuing to work on disposal of Council-owned land that will deliver an estimated 65 more affordable rented homes in the coming years including more supported homes.

Supported Accommodation

9.28 Supported housing plays a key role in preventing homelessness and maintaining independence for those who need it. LBRuT continues to support the development and reconfiguration of supported housing accommodation owned by RPs in the Borough. In 2016, Council owned land was sold at a discounted value and supported with a successful bid for £250,000 from the Mayor's Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund. Bespoke supported accommodation units were designed and delivered to provide homes for people with learning disabilities and complex needs on the autism spectrum. Savings made to the HCP following the input of mayoral funding into this scheme will assist to deliver an additional four supported housing units on a subsequent land disposal scheme in 2018.

Affordable Homes Programme

9.29 On 1 April 2012 the London Affordable Home Programme became the responsibility of the Mayor. The GLA allocated funding in the 2015-2018 Programme⁵⁴ for schemes which will be delivered by 31st March 2019. LBRuT's three largest social housing providers, RHP, Thames Valley Housing and PA Housing, were awarded grant funding to deliver schemes for the Borough, although this funding is allocated on a scheme by scheme basis and not restricted to the Borough specifically. This funding included £360,000 from the Mayor's Building the Pipeline Fund for RHP to deliver 24 affordable rented homes in LBRuT and £250,000 from the Mayor's Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund for PA Housing to deliver a scheme of four supported homes to enable clients of the learning disability service in LBRuT with high complex needs to access independent living.

The Future of Affordable Homes Delivery

9.30 The Mayor's Affordable Housing Programme 2016-21 has an allocation from Government of over £3bn to help start building at least 90,000 affordable homes by 2021. The Programme contains a commitment to fund a range of tenures with one third to be provided at a London Affordable Rent as defined in the Programme and two thirds to be provided as shared ownership or London Living Rent. The Mayor has set benchmark rents for London Affordable Rent to support households on lower incomes. London Living Rent enables eligible households to rent at no more than 80% of local market rents and save to purchase their rented home. The Programme will also support funding for specialist rented homes for older, disabled and vulnerable people.

9.31 The initial allocations for new build schemes in LBRuT announced by the Mayor in July 2017 will fund 48 London Affordable Rent homes, 10 London Living Rent homes and 40 shared ownership homes through the GLA's continuous market engagement programmes. As new opportunities emerge partner RPs will bid for additional funding. The Mayor's funding for the Ham Close regeneration scheme will support the re-provision of 142 London Affordable Rented homes for existing tenants and 49 shared equity homes for existing leaseholders.

⁵⁴ <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/increasing-housing-supply/mayor%E2%80%99s-housing-covenant-2015-18-programme>

- 9.32 The Programme also provides funding for schemes that support those who are homeless, or at risk of being homeless and also funding for schemes specifically earmarked for people who are moving on from either hostels or refuges.
- 9.33 The Mayor has also published an Affordable Housing and Viability SPG in August 2017. The Guidance aims for the planning system to deliver tenure mix in the proportions of 30% London Affordable Rent, 30% London Living Rent or Shared Ownership and the remaining 40% to be subject to LA discretion. LBRuT's current affordable housing planning policies set the ratio of affordable rent to intermediate/shared ownership at 80:20 however if this represents the local discretionary contribution, the remainder will not necessarily meet the Borough's priority housing needs.
- 9.34 The Government's housing white paper, *Fixing Our Broken Housing Market*⁵⁵, provided further clarification on Starter Homes and confirmed that the duty on LAs to promote the supply of Starter Homes is to commence. The paper set out that LAs should deliver Starter Homes as part of a mixed package of affordable housing that can respond to local needs and local markets. Rather than a mandatory requirement of 20% of all new developments being Starter Homes, it is intended that the NPPF is amended to introduce a clear policy expectation that housing sites deliver a minimum of 10% affordable home ownership units, which may include Starter Homes. Income thresholds of £80,000 outside and £90,000 inside London (mirroring those for shared ownership) have been introduced along with a requirement for purchasers to have a mortgage, thus excluding cash buyers.
- 9.35 The Council is currently considering alternative ways that it may apply its HCP to provide additional housing, which involves low cost shared ownership, through the provision of equity loans on existing stock.
- 9.36 The relaxation of permitted development restrictions to allow conversion of office and retail floor space to residential homes may continue to restrict opportunities to secure onsite affordable housing or through Section 106 contributions. Local planning policy currently seeks to maximise delivery of affordable housing in schemes involving loss of employment floor space where planning permission is required, with at least 50% on-site affordable housing; however there has been considerable interest in taking advantage of these relaxations, thereby restricting the opportunities to secure affordable housing through the planning process.
- 9.37 Despite such challenges in affordable rented development, the Council maintains the advantage of being able to utilise the HCP in order to support RPs to ensure developments that meet the Council's strategic priorities are financially viable.

Emerging Findings

Temporary Accommodation

- Relatively low numbers of homeless acceptances means that TA use, and in particular use of B&B, is fairly low and has remained stable over recent years. It is positive to note that there is not an issue with pregnant women or households containing dependent children being in B&B for longer than six weeks which indicates that available TA is being appropriately used and adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that suitable placements are made.
- The Council has been successful in maintaining TA provision in Borough and locally in neighbouring boroughs. However, this has involved the Council funding placements in high

⁵⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market>

cost units, due to the nature of the local housing market, and has resulted in a significant overspend in this area. Consideration must be given to what approach the Council favours going forward and how best to balance conflicting priorities of providing local TA whilst ensuring that efficiencies are made. A more sustainable solution may be to procure TA further afield in which to place those households who do not have a specific need to remain local, while the Council continues to prioritise certain households for in-borough and other local placements, such as those with current child protection proceedings or children at particular education stages.

Supported Housing Review

- Review of the funding model for supported housing in England and devolving this funding to local authorities means consideration will need to be given to how we commission supported housing in the future.

Affordable Housing Development

- It is positive to note that affordable housing will be considered as a corporate objective for 2017/18. Whilst new development cannot alone be a solution to housing need it is part of a multifaceted approach which includes increasing turnover in social stock, improving access to the PRS and, where appropriate, encouraging access to home ownership. Affordable housing products may not provide accommodation directly for homeless households, who in most cases are likely to be reliant on social rented accommodation; however their development contributes to the available housing options in the Borough. The Council should continue therefore to support new development, in particular that which facilitates affordable housing products, including considering innovative models of delivery that may address both the needs for TA for homeless households but also for low to middle income earners in the Borough.
- The Council should consider the bed-size delivered as affordable developments exploring the potential to target some provision of high quality smaller accommodation that would encourage under occupiers in existing social housing, particularly the elderly, to move and therefore release larger sized accommodation.
- In light of emerging regional policy the Council should undertake a review of its Intermediate Housing Policy to greater meet and give access to a wide range of intermediate affordable housing opportunities.

10. Resources

10.1 Throughout the Homelessness Review reference has been made to resources available to prevent and relieve homelessness, including DHP grants, funding provided to SPEAR, affordable housing grants, etc. This chapter sets out the staffing and financial resources which have not yet been detailed elsewhere.

What the SSA means for the Homelessness Service in Richmond

10.2 LBRuT and WBC entered into a unique joint SSA on 1 October 2016. The SSA became one of the biggest staff groups in London local government with the aim of maintaining the quality, specialisms and expertise at both Councils but in a more financially sustainable model. The Councils each retain their sovereignty but are committed to working jointly to improve public services for residents across both Boroughs. The SSA offers the opportunity to work in new ways, learn from each other and be a part of a ground breaking organisation that is fit for the future and focused on outcomes and value for money for residents. The model provides resilience and the capacity to deploy staff resources where needed in respond to demand.

10.3 The table below shows the staff impact the SSA has had on Council homelessness services.

Pre SSA			Post SSA			
Team	Management	Officers	Team	Management	Officers	Location
Housing Options Team	1	8	Housing Information and Advice Team	2	8	Twickenham Offices
Housing Provision Team	1	6	Allocations and Nominations Team	2	8	Wandsworth Offices
Hostel Management Team	2	2	Property Management Team	2	14	Operate across four hubs in Richmond and Wandsworth
Temporary Accommodation Team	1	7	Temporary Accommodation Team	2	9	Wandsworth Offices
Home Improvement Agency	1	7	Home Improvement Agency	1	10	Twickenham Offices
Resettlement Team	1	4	Resettlement Team	2	4	Twickenham Offices
Total	7	34	Total	11	53	

Table 14, Source: Council's own data

10.4 Whilst the total number of managers and officers has increased it is of note that many of these teams are now performing their functions across two boroughs and the net number of officers across both boroughs has in fact decreased. The service has been organised to ensure that key areas of demand are met, for example the retention of the Resettlement Team which has been shown to successfully deliver cost-saving outcomes for LBRuT through intensive tailored support targeted to vulnerable residents.

- 10.5 The Housing Information and Advice Team continues to operate from the Twickenham offices to ensure that LBRuT residents have the same level of access to this service. Two teams based in the Wandsworth offices perform the same housing prevention and Part VII services for Wandsworth residents. The new mix of staff results in increased skills and knowledge and effective sharing of these. For example, WBC has responded to an increased demand on its service by developing new routes by which to source TA which LBRuT will be able to utilise.
- 10.6 Whilst the provision of Part VII services will not directly affect interaction with residents, some of the operational aspects of providing these services involve cross-borough working. For example when an interim duty to provide homeless applicants with TA arises, the Housing Information and Advice Team will request an allocation of TA from the Temporary Accommodation Team based in Wandsworth. In addition any request for a homeless application decision review may be passed between the Housing information and Advice Team and the two teams within Wandsworth (Customer Services and Housing Options, and Casework and Reviews).

Resources Map

- 10.7 This section provides an overview of the Resources available to the Council and its partners in addressing homelessness.

Homelessness Prevention Grant

- 10.8 The Homelessness Directorate at DCLG identifies a homelessness prevention component, calculated in line with the Council's Core Spending Power, of the Revenue Support Grant. This is intended to be used to resource and address homelessness issues, as identified in the Borough's Homelessness Strategy. The funding is not ring-fenced. For 2016/17 the Council has allocated £238,800 to homelessness prevention funding to support rough sleeping and outreach services.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Rough Sleeping Homelessness Grant Funding (DCLG)	£253,000	£253,000	£238,800	£238,800	£238,800

Table 15, Source: Council's own data

- 10.9 In November 2016 the Council successfully bid for DCLG funding to enhance rough sleeper services. The DCLG made available £10m, running in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19, to help new rough sleepers or people at imminent risk of sleeping rough receive the rapid support they need to recover and move on from their homelessness. The funding available was limited to a maximum of £200,000 per annum for each successful bid.
- 10.10 LBRuT, working in partnership with LB Wandsworth, RB Kingston and SPEAR, submitted a bid for the maximum available funding, which has been granted. The proposed model involves commissioning SPEAR to provide rough sleeper outreach, the development of three staging post HMOs and resettlement into the private rented sector, delivered by 5.5 members of staff. As agreed with the South West London Partnership, LB Merton and LB Sutton have submitted a mirror bid which will enable enhanced partnership working across the region.

Rough Sleeping Commissioning Funding

- 10.11 Although Supporting People funding is no longer ring-fenced and has been subsumed into the Formula Grant, the Council ensures that a proportion of this is still directed towards providing housing related support with the aim of allowing individuals to live independently in their accommodation. Support can be long or short term and can be via supported accommodation

or through floating support. The table below outlines the funding made available through the Commissioning Funding fund for rough sleeping in the Borough, as delivered by SPEAR.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Rough Sleeping Commissioning Funding	£262,308	£260,524	£260,520	£244,896	£246,192

Table 16, Source: Council's own data

Spending

Total Grant Spending

10.12 Strategically relevant groups include: people with mental health problems, ex-offenders, single homeless/rough sleepers, domestic violence victims, and gypsies and travellers. Relevant services are currently delivered through a number of partners, including Refuge (all domestic violence provision), SPEAR (homelessness services) and RHP (Tenant and Travellers Support). Table 17 shows total grant spending on homelessness through the Council since the previous review was undertaken.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Homelessness Grant Spending*	£700,000	£596,615	£596,615	£587,490.51

Table 17, Source: Council's own data

*NB – This is total funding for both rough sleeping services and prevention of homelessness e.g. funding rent deposit, rent in advance scheme and other homeless prevention activity.

Temporary Accommodation

10.13 As outlined in *Accommodation Services* the Council's TA costs are high, particularly when considered in the context of relatively low rates of homeless decisions and acceptances. Table 18 sets out total spending on TA in 2015/16 broken down between rent and other costs, which includes staff costs such as salaries and costs relating to the maintenance of buildings including cleaning, furniture and Council Tax, etc.

TA Spending	2015/16 Budget	2015/16 Actual Spend	Variance
Rents	£1,096,700	£1,149,052	52,353
Other Costs	£693,100	£597,267	-95,833
Total Spend	£1,789,800	£1,746,319	-43,481

Table 18, Source: Council's own data

10.14 Rental costs make up by far the largest proportion of the TA budget, accounting for over 60% of the yearly spend. Although overall actual spend was £43,481 less than was budgeted for, this is due to savings in other costs, with an overspend relating to rents of £52,353. Given that use of TA has remained fairly static over the period since the previous Review, and relatively low levels of homeless acceptances in the Borough, this level of TA spend is indicative of the high costs of maintaining current arrangements whereby homeless households are accommodated in Borough or in neighbouring boroughs. Whether or not it is feasible to continue this policy going forward will be an important consideration informing the Homelessness Strategy.

Support Services

Troubled Family Funding

10.15 The Government's Troubled Families Programme is delivered locally through AfC as the Strengthening Families programme⁵⁶. This funds a results-based model which uses targeted intervention to support the most disadvantaged families, addressing issues including money management and ASB within housing. The Government identified that 640 families in LBRuT could be eligible for support over the life of the programme.

Homeless Health Link

10.16 The Council, in conjunction with SPEAR, successfully bid for £249,000 in grant funding from central government to set up the Homeless Health Link service, which operates across Richmond, Wandsworth, Kingston, Sutton, and Merton boroughs. The team work with rough sleepers and ex-rough sleeper clients to engage with GP and dentistry services. They also support clients to engage with secondary mental health, substance misuse and specialist health services. SPEAR have been successful in a bid for Big Lottery funding to sustain the project for a further two years (2017/18 – 2018/19).

Welfare Advice

10.17 As detailed in the Prevention Services chapter, the Council has a contract with RCAB to provide generalist community advice (£320,000 per annum), which has been extended until March 2018. In addition to this, the Council also commissions a specialist community advice service from RAID (£100,000) which ends in March 2018. Both organisations expect the need for digital inclusion support to increase as UC is rolled out fully.

Emerging Findings

- The Finance Settlement for LBRuT details a homelessness prevention component of how the Revenue Support Grant is calculated in line with the Council's Core Spending Power. The Homelessness Directorate at DCLG identifies this component to assist councils to resource and address homelessness issues; these are identified in the Borough's Homelessness Strategy. For 2016/17 the Council has allocated £238,800 to Homelessness Prevention Funding to support Rough Sleeping and outreach services. In addition, Commissioning Funding for rough sleepers (formerly Supporting People Funding) will be £246,192.
- TA costs are high. In 2015/16, TA costs totalled £1,789,800 of which £1,096,700 was spent on rents. This level of spend is indicative of the high costs of maintaining current arrangements whereby homeless households are accommodated in Borough or in neighbouring boroughs. Whether or not it is feasible to continue this policy going forward will be an important consideration informing the Homelessness Strategy.
- Council-commissioned services include a contract with RCAB to provide generalist community advice (£320,000 per annum), which has been extended until March 2018, and a specialist community advice service from RAID (£100,000) which ends in March 2018.
- Recent successes in obtaining DCLG grants to enhance provision for rough sleepers and victims of domestic abuse are indicative of the strong partnership working in the Borough and the level of services for people facing a housing problem.
- New duties brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act necessitate the Council and its partners taking an innovative approach to organising resources and utilising funding

⁵⁶ http://fluencycontent2-schoolwebsite.netdna-ssl.com/FileCluster/AchievingForChildren/Mainfolder/documents/Strengthening_Families_Delivery_Framework.pdf

streams other than the traditional Government grant and exploiting these opportunities will become increasingly important. Similarly, the Council may need to consider staffing resources to ensure adequate provision to meet additional workload brought about by the Act; this will be clearer once more details are released about additional funding from the Government and once the relatively new SSA structure has had chance to bed-in. Additional staff training will be a priority in ensuring that relevant teams are prepared for the new legislation.

11. Consultation

Methodology

11.1 In preparation for the Homelessness Review a number of key partners including members of the Homelessness Forum were consulted through an email questionnaire. Responses have helped shape priorities for the Review, identifying a number of cross-cutting themes, issues and challenges. The questionnaire addressed the following:

- Immediate/medium/long term preventative services;
- Accommodation pathway;
- Accommodation provision;
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
- Partnership working;
- Gaps in provision.

Responses

Preventative services

11.2 The Council encourages preventative work in order to avoid escalation into homelessness. Support services play a vital role in enabling vulnerable people to continue living in the community (see 'Prevention Services' for a more detailed breakdown of individual services). The majority of local agencies provide information and advice on housing issues in the first instance, or signpost, where needed, when a client presents as homeless. The Council has also instated a representative Councillor for those in RP homes, known as the Tenants' Champion⁵⁷, who acts as an escalation point if there are any issues. For those in immediate need, the Council's social work team, as well as partners such as Refuge, are able to provide discretionary payment to prevent homelessness, such as long stay hospital admissions where a discharge date is known. The Homelessness Reduction Act will formalise much of the prevention activity which the Council and its local partners are already undertaking; strong relationships and established referral routes provide a solid base to build on to enhance this.

Accommodation Provision

11.3 Accommodation provision, both temporary and permanent, is of particular concern to agencies consulted. Responses noted that there is a lack of accommodation to provide for the homelessness population which often results in placing service users outside the Borough (see 'Accommodation Services' for a more detailed breakdown of temporary and permanent accommodation provision).

11.4 Issues around the availability and supply of TA, finding PRS accommodation (for low income households) and the supply of affordable housing are key issues facing every London borough. The Council recognises that provision of accommodation is an ongoing challenge and that in-borough and accessible out of borough placement for eligible households must remain a policy priority.

Gaps in Local Provision

11.5 Responses from local agencies have displayed a concern about the impact of UC, both for those in receipt of it and in terms of current resources available to manage the changes. Many

⁵⁷ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/Tenants_champion

partners feel that there is currently insufficient provision in terms of digital inclusion and financial inclusion support and that demand for this will grow as rollout continues. The Council continues to commission RCAB to provide support including welfare benefit advice.

- 11.6 Local agencies highlighted the view that there is insufficient provision for young people with substance misuse difficulties and those who are released from hospitals and prisons. Agencies have also outlined concerns around the shortage of mental health accommodation provision within the Borough. Commissioning plans are underway by the CCG to increase the capacity of these services by a further 27 units (spread across support levels) in two phases over the next three years. In addition, it should be noted that there are hostel places for offenders and joint working between AfC and partner agencies is strong.

Strengths

- 11.7 The Council is committed to working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to deliver its Homelessness Strategy and action plan. This is recognised by local agencies who feel that partnership working and multi-agency panels are a particular strength of housing services within the Borough. Local agencies recognise the effective front-line work which takes place across partner organisations in sustaining tenancies and preventing eviction. The knowledge which agencies have of available services ensures that clients are not bounced back and forth, and the commitment to preventative work allows for those at risk to be dealt with before there is escalation.

Weaknesses

- 11.8 There are, however, challenges for the Council in tackling homelessness. As outlined above, local agencies have identified that limited access to and availability of TA is a particular weakness within the Borough and those requiring such accommodation are often housed outside of the Borough. This is a London-wide challenge (which requires a pan-London response) and the fact that placements are generally in adjacent boroughs is positive; the Council is doing all it reasonably can to keep homeless households as close to the Borough as possible.
- 11.9 Early intervention has been highlighted by local agencies as a weakness of homelessness provision and local agencies reported that only those close to eviction/crisis point receive support. However, this was recognised by agencies as being as a result of lack of resources, rather than a commitment to preventative work. The new duties contained in the Homelessness Prevention Bill will mean a greater emphasis on early intervention to stop a housing problem reaching the point of a homelessness crisis and local agencies will be required to work collaboratively with the Council in discharging these duties.
- 11.10 Some local agencies also registered concern with the PRS, particularly the increasing gap between local private rents and LHA caps to HB. This will mean resettling people into local PRS accommodation has become and will continue to become increasingly difficult. Local agencies feel that these particular issues are compounded by lack of enforcement in the private sector, an issue which is not exclusive to LBRuT. A challenge for both the Council and local agencies is therefore how to maintain access to this sector, both in and out of the Borough.

Threats

- 11.11 Many of those consulted felt that the biggest threat to homelessness within the Borough is the rollout of UC and the impact this will have on homelessness. Local agencies expressed concern that those in receipt of UC may struggle to manage budgets. This is seen as having been compounded by the cuts in council budgets and caps to HB, and still further by increasing

rental prices. When the full UC service goes live there will be an increase of claimants requiring support to navigate the system; they will be expected to apply for the benefit online and manage their own money, paying rent direct to their landlord. The Council will be looked upon to help prepare local communities for the change and/or support community and voluntary groups to do that on their behalf. Agencies recognise that this could lead to rent arrears, financial hardship and eventually homelessness, leading to a future cost to the Council.

11.12 The Council and its partners, particularly the JCP and RCAB, need to continue to provide support as necessary to UC claimants and ensure that an adequate level of assistance is maintained. It should be noted that planned restrictions on HB for under 35s is likely to have an impact, particularly for those who are not in priority need, although the Homelessness Reduction Act will provide some level of assistance for this group.

Opportunities

11.13 Despite the recognition of good partnership work across the Borough, some local agencies feel that there is an opportunity to develop these relationships further, including the operations of housing, health and skills/employment, and particularly in relation to the housing application procedure, to ensure a more integrated response to homelessness within the Borough. It has also been recognised that there is an opportunity for further skills development and training through partnerships with local businesses.

11.14 Early intervention is recognised by the Council as the most effective way in preventing homelessness and the inevitable knock-on long-term costs, which has also been seen by local agencies as an opportunity to develop an effective prevention strategy and service within LBRuT. The Homelessness Reduction Act presents further impetus to do this, focusing on upstream prevention for all households regardless of priority need status.

11.15 Partners also expressed a need and opportunity to tackle rogue landlords and ensure good practice across the sector. Issues with private renting have been observed nationally⁵⁸ and, whilst the majority of private landlords are diligent and responsible, the Council are committed to ensuring good practice where possible.

Pathways

11.16 Local agencies are knowledgeable on the pathways that exist within LBRuT and there is a wide understanding of the services provided by different agencies. SPEAR presents a clear internal pathway for rough sleepers within the Borough (see *Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping* for a breakdown of this), allowing clients to integrate into the community through supported accommodation and employment support. In addition to SPEAR's pathway, the CCG currently has separately commissioned services under different contracts and terms at present which are being formalised into a single cohesive pathway for mental health, as part of the upcoming tender.

Limitations

11.17 Despite consultation with a wide number of partners involved in homelessness within the Borough, there remain gaps in feedback, in particular whilst some health and social care agencies participated, some did not. The Council recognises that a joined up response of partners is essential in tackling homelessness and will continue to work with local agencies in developing effective responses.

⁵⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/5-million-cash-for-councils-to-stop-rogue-landlords>

11.18 The Council would like to take the opportunity to thank organisations who took part in the consultation:

- Achieving for Children
- Age UK
- Richmond Clinical Commissioning Group
- Richmond Citizens Advice Bureau
- Community Safety (Council)
- Hampton Fuel Allotments Charity
- Housing Advice and Information Team (Council)
- IAPT Mental Health
- Job Centre Plus
- Probation
- Refuge
- Richmond Housing Partnership
- Richmond Aid
- Social Work & AMHP (Council)
- South West London and St Georges
- SPEAR
- Thames Valley Housing Association
- Victim Support
- Vineyard Community Centre
- Welfare Reform (Council)